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WINTER '60-'61 VOLUME XX NO. 4

Personal Responsibility, Determinism, and the Burden of Understanding 405
article by EDWARD JOSEPH SHOBEN, JR.

Stalin's Ghost and the Khrushchev Thaw: Soviet Historians in the Crucible 417
article by ROBERT D. WARTH

At Coney Island 425
poem by KNUTE SKINNER

A Distant Drum 426
poem by JOHN ATHERTON

Woman of Brown Skin 427
poem by JEANNETTE NICHOLS

Burma and Its Army: A Contrast in Motivations and Characteristics 428
article by TREVOR N. DUPUY

The Money 441
story by WARREN BECK

To Richard Wright 464
poem by CONRAD KENT RIVERS

Wendy Is a Name 466
poem by RALPH L. KINSEY

The Arts Today 467
article by BERTRAM MORRIS

Five O'Clock Shadow 477
poem by ROBERT L. TYLER

Father, Forever 478
poem by MYRON LEVOY

On Decoding Humor 479
article by JUDSON JEROME

On Watching the Construction of a Skyscraper 493
poem by BURTON RAFFEL

The Crow 494
poem by EVA BEARD

Very Well 496
poem by HOLLIS SUMMERS

Mindyah 497
story by GEORGE BLUESTONE

Southern Tale 512
poem by LUCIEN STRYK

Shoring Up the Bulwark of a New Frontier 513
discussion by OTTO KRASH

Age Was a Bird 517
poem by KENNETH BERNARD

Sholom Aleichem: A Hundred Years and It's Still "Now" 518
book feature by LEONARD E. NATHAN

More on Wisdom vs. Knowledge 524
review by GEORGE R. GEIGER

Drawings: Mel Strawn, pages 409, 433; Brenda Lowen, pages 446, 463.

Editor's Shop Talk

In the 1956 election year, an introduction to a series of political articles in the *Review* drew some parallels between the two great American sports—baseball and politics. The analogy is even more pronounced after the election just concluded.

We speak not so much of the partisanship and World Series atmosphere which is part of every campaign, but more particularly of the numbers game that takes place after every "fall classic." Almost as soon as the tabulations began on the night America didn't sleep, the statisticians, who had remained so coyly silent the three months previous, began to spout figures like Mel Allen: the largest vote; the second youngest president-elect; the smallest margin; the first first-lady-elect mother-to-be; the largest popular vote to a losing candidate; the largest television audience at 4:00 a.m., EST; the first this; the smallest that. Old reliable weather-vane precincts failed ignominiously; new ones rose for a while to swing crazily like frightened rookies before striking out; and the vendors hawked their wares and obstructed our view. Both winning and losing candidates emerged with more statistical glory than Casey Stengel.

And with the new statistics for future contestants to aim at, come the bright, knowing lights of hindsight and the establishment of new formulas for divination. Just as after a ball game we know that a switch-hitting right fielder was never any match for a knuckle-ball pitcher, so after an election we find ourselves putting our faith in the Popcorn Bag Poll or the

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results of a straw vote in the third grade of P.S. 97. We will leave the final analysis of this election's crop of statistics to the computors and the political scientists to do with as they like. We have picked up our own infallible guide to future politics: Since William Howard Taft, the major party candidate with the longest name has always won.

* * *

On page 428 is one of the first editorial fruits of editor Paul Bixler's two-year stint in Burma where he was advisor to the Social Science Library of the University of Rangoon. While there he came across the makings of many good articles among both the native and the foreign advisor populations—articles growing out of their observations and their work.

Articles from foreign sources, however, present several dangers for American editors. Many of them suffer a sea change when read on the other side of the globe. Somehow, what seemed so important in the country of origin seems merely provincial in another climate; what seemed so significant turns out to be of only local significance; what seemed so revealing there looks just quaint here. The results can be like the small girl's report on a book about penguins: "This book told me more about penguins than I care to know."

At the other extreme is the short-term expert. Some time ago we attended a lecture on the Arab refugee problem with a friend just returned from five years with the Friends Service Committee in the Middle East. The lecturer, himself recently back from the Gaza Strip, spoke with authority about the problem and its solution. Our friend remarked ruefully, "He's lucky; he was there for six months. It's only after a year there that the problem gets too complex for easy answers."

It would seem, then, that reports from abroad take not only an acute observer, but one who has observed in depth, returned, pondered what he has seen, and presented it in a framework of significance to a wider audience.

We think Col. Dupuy has done this admirably in his study of the Burma Army "Caretaker Government." That an army took over a government is not unusual. That it ran it efficiently and honestly and turned it back to the civilians through the channels of a democratic election is so unusual that it may be merely eccentric. But this unique event in Burmese history may have wider implications. With the army in control in such places as Turkey and fighting for control in the Congo, perhaps we should examine the role of the military in the emerging nations and find out just what sort of force for good or ill it can be. And it is to this larger question that Col. Dupuy applies his experience and knowledge of Burma.

We hope for more studies of this kind from colleagues and acquaintances abroad. P. H. B.

Personal Responsibility, Determinism, and the Burden of Understanding

By EDWARD JOSEPH SHOBEN, JR.

■ In 1793, Pinel struck the chains from the inmates of the Bicetre, staking his job and his reputation on the conception that the insane were sick human beings. While his ideas were not without precedent, his action provides a useful symbol of the ending of one era in man's thinking about man and the beginning of another. For with the links of iron, there fell a set of conceptions that had long guided men's efforts to understand the emotional troubles to which they are heir.

The predominant notions that had previously governed thought about disturbances of behavior were supernaturalistic and moralistic in tone and often cruel in their implications. The deviant person was by definition one who had offended God, been possessed by the devil, committed some major sin, surrendered his humanity in some voluntary way, or had been "born that way" in the sense of having been forever out of grace by destiny. Beating with chains, scourging, and the ducking stool were combined with prayer as methods of eliminating the devil's agents from the soul of the patient or providing a means of atonement for the commission of sins. Repentance and "being made clean again" were the goals of what would now

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be called mental health. Even in so enlightened an earlier period as the Renaissance, the outright psychotics were regarded as less than human and consequently as legitimate objects of mixed fear and derision. Tom 'o Bedlam in *King Lear* embodies that status of the mental patient at such a time.

With Pinel, however, things changed. Psychotics—and, by extension, other sufferers from behavioral disorders—were to be considered as people entitled to humane treatment. Further, their difference from others was to be conceived as medical in nature, analogous to the differences observable as a result of bodily diseases. Like those beset by consumption, gout, and the plague, the insane were to be thought of with sympathy, dealt with considerately, and looked upon as victimized by some external and naturalistic process of a pathological character.

This point of view was in harmony, of course, with two developing traditions that have been enormously influential and useful in the modern world. One was the tradition of physical and biological science, receiving its impetus in large part from Newton and Harvey and growing in vogue as its applicability to immediately practical affairs became apparent through the Industrial Revolution. The other was the tradition of naturalistic and liberal social thought as expressed in the *philosophes* and given currency in the American and French Revolutions of which Pinel was a contemporary. As Freud gave shape to these patterns of ideas a hundred years later, they acquired the explicitly deterministic and non-evaluative character which typifies the social science of the twentieth century. So far as behavioral abnormalities are concerned, they are interpreted as products of knowable (if not known) outcomes of heredity and environmental interactions. They are defined as problems only with reference to some kind of cultural or societal context on the ground that neurotics and psychotics do not fit productively into the social scheme of things. When the troubles of any individual classify him as such a problem, he is to be regarded as "sick" and subjected to therapy in order to correct the pathogenic influences of his history. If treatment fails, then he is removed to an institution in which he will be cared for as humanely as finances will permit while society functions without the disruption of his presence in it.

The essence of this point of view, which seems so thoroughly appropriate if not downright inevitable to at least the educated in today's Western world, is its basis in the outlook and methods of science. Human disorders are conceived, like other phenomena, to be outgrowths of naturalistic processes occurring in orderly if complex sequences. What happens later in the sequence is determined by what happened earlier. Since the sequences are lawful, knowledge of them is possible and affords a predictive understanding of their outcomes. If ways can be devised to intervene in the sequences, manipulating them in some selected fashion, then their results can be controlled as well as predictively understood.

The great advantages of the scientific *Weltanschauung* in physics and biology are both evident and incontestable. Especially in its application to technology and medicine has science proved its utility beyond question. Moreover, it seems fair to assert that the only route to genuine public knowledge is that provided by science. In the behavioral disciplines, science has in large degree replaced authority, prejudice, and unbridled speculation in the comprehension of human affairs. Substantial knowledge of such processes as learning and perception, of such important groups as women and racial stocks, and of such relationships as those between parents and children and between social structures and character formation has been recently developed with happy changes both in the general intellectual climate and in social policy. Thus, poverty is no longer regarded as a proper object for moral censure but a function of complex societal processes and individual characteristics. Similarly, delinquents and neurotics are more likely to be pitied for their illness than condemned for their sin. Programs aimed at alleviating such conditions as poverty, crime, and emotional disorder seem much more effective by virtue of their grounding in basic knowledge rather than in moralistic judgments often a bit whimsical in their nature.

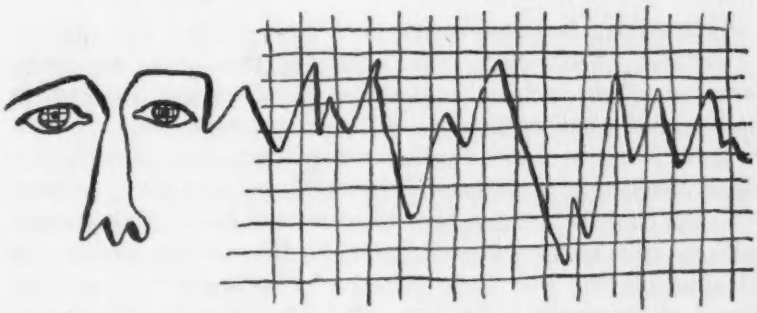
But it must be noted that the growth of science in the study of behavior has had two very different kinds of consequences. First, as in physics and biology, the social sciences have acquired high instrumental utility. Given a particular objective, the knowledge generated by psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics often provides an answer to the question of how to attain it. Sometimes the answer is highly applicable, sometimes less so. Over a wide

range of problems, however, the contribution of behavioral science is consistently to reduce the error in estimates of how to achieve an agreed-upon goal.

On the other hand, behavioral science has produced changes in the values men hold as well as showing them how to achieve some of those they cherish. It has already been pointed out how the development of a naturalistic and deterministic science altered the view of psychotics and neurotics in a more humanitarian direction. No member of the helping professions is likely to argue that such a change in valuational attitudes is undesirable. Yet it is legitimate to ask if modifications of this sort have taken place without the slighting of some significant features of human life.

In rising to the challenge of this question, one may wonder, first of all, if some of the humanitarian attitudes concomitant to science have not been correlated with other values that are not entirely consonant with it. To take only one of the many possible examples, the tendency of clinicians, quite in keeping with a deterministic logic, is to search for the roots of emotional disorder in their patients through examining their histories, especially the histories of their relationships with parents and similar significant figures. Because parent-child frictions appear with high frequency under such conditions, clinical workers tend to conceive of parents as the villians of the pathological piece, the latter-day devils whose possession of the psyche of their youngster accounts for his delinquent actions or his neurotic anxieties. Certainly, it is not uncommon in the counseling or psychotherapy of young adults for inferences about the parents to be used in explaining the client's conduct in spite of two facts: The clinician has often not seen the parents, and he is generally quite willing to assert *abstractly* that patients are seldom objective informants about those who play significant roles in their lives.

It is quite possible that parents wear the cloven hoof more frequently than other people. But the attitude that is under discussion as an outgrowth of the sophisticated contemporary view of human behavior entails some embarrassing contradictions. First of all, it overlooks the implication of a kind of infinite regress in accounting for psychological malaise. If the troubles of a given client are the result of his parents' neuroses, were not they products of *their* par-



ents' disorders? And so on, back through the family line? If the scheme is admissible at all, there is little room for devils in it, and no generation is more blameworthy than any other. True, one can argue, not without cogency, that blame is beside the point; but this argument seems honored at least as much in the breach as in the observance, and it presents problems when one hears clinicians discuss the desirability of a patient's expressing his negative and hostile feelings toward his parents or their surrogates as a condition of his improvement.

Second, this view of things ignores the concept of individual responsibility. While it is quite possible to make out a case under the banner of determinism for the irrelevance of such a notion, it is worth remarking that nobody behaves as if he believed such a case were true. Judgments of responsibility are shot through the warp of social life, and the ubiquitousness of such judgments is as much a part of humanity as are thought and its vehicle, language. Perhaps this observation justifies a brief scanning of the concept in relation to the problems under scrutiny.

As a term, "responsibility" refers to two different things.[1] One has to do with a logical and deterministic relationship between observations or constructs. Thus, it makes perfectly good sense to speak, for example, of previous frustrations as "responsible" in some degree for one's present aggressions. In such a context, responsibility is defined by the extent to which one may logically or empirically explain one variable in terms of another. The other meaning of

[1]The distinction drawn here is similar to that made by H. Fingarette, "Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Moral Guilt and Responsibility," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1955, *16*, pp. 18-36.

"responsibility," however, is concerned descriptively with a pattern of behavior. There seem to be essentially three types of actions involved in "responsibility" in this sense: the keeping of both explicit and implied promises, the acknowledgment of error, and a tendency to act *as if* one were to a significant extent the master of one's own destiny. A kind of prototypically responsible person, therefore, is one who can be relied upon to keep his word and to act in accordance with the rules he has acknowledged as binding on him, who admits his mistakes, and who shows attitudinal evidence of regarding his future as somewhat in his own discharge. Like all trait names, "responsibility" implies a dimension along which people can be ordered in terms of more or less, and no one probably fits one extreme or the other with exactness. But the central point is that the concept can be construed in a purely behavioral way, and the construction seems to identify a class of conduct that is vitally important in human relationships.

The basic charge implied in these comments is that contemporary behavioral science has been unconcerned with the self-determining characteristics and potentialities of the person. As a result, it occupies a curious position both philosophically and programmatically. In its outlook, it has substituted a kind of fatalism of events for the fatalism of divinity typical of older points of view. Demon possession, failure of divine election, or a state of being out of grace have given way to parental mishandling, an unhealthy ordering of society, or faulty education. But while these latter explanations of disturbed conduct are presumably more susceptible to correction, and while they clearly support a gentler and more humane approach to troubled people, they neither suggest any promising basis for remedial or developmental work with the individual case, nor do they take into account that characteristic human tendency, so central in the judgments of men about each other, to regard oneself and one's fellows as something more than pawns on the genetic and environmental chessboard. In a sense, the discarding of the notion of sin along with the supernatural overtones it carried in the days before Pinel may have amounted to a dumping of the baby with the bath water. If sin implied a punitive kind of treatment, it also acknowledged personal responsibility and self-determination as a human attribute. One need not defend cruelty to find a meaningful challenge in recollecting that

exposure to the scourge and the ducking stool was sometimes associated with behavioral improvement, just as, among modern patients, there is a moderate correlation between behavioral improvement and exposure to various shock therapies, many of which are terrifying to those who undergo them.

This oversimplification of determinism into a fatalism of events and this neglect of the self-determining quality of human character may have had noteworthy programmatic consequences. Among other things, much research has been devoted to identifying the explanatory antecedents of criminal or psychopathological tendencies (the "sins" of yesteryear), neglecting the value systems associated with such tendencies or the problem of how such values are learned and modified. As a result, quite a good deal is known about troubled and disordered personalities but very little about zestful and contentedly vigorous ways of life and how they may be facilitated. Similarly, in concentrating on the adverse and unfortunate effects of punitive methods of child care, education, and treatment, behavioral science has not yet come to grips with the problem of how people respond to challenges, the extent to which they find standards useful in the achievement of maturity, and the degree to which their self-worth is dependent on an acquired sense of integrity, a relatively clear set of principles by which their lives are guided, and the formulation of ideals. It is as if the "virtuous" were merely the "non-sinful"—as if normality or maturity were merely the absence of pathological traits or symptoms. Since the *forms* that pathology takes are often determined by their cultural or social context, such a conception leads to the implication that the normal person is simply the innocuous conformist who creates a minimum of trouble for his group. Recent attacks on the behavioral sciences as advocating a kind of spineless "adjustment"[2] to the immediate social world, while quite wrongheaded, are the understandable spawn of this omission in the research and service programs of psychology, sociology, education, and their intellectual kin.

It is important to be clear: Nothing said here is to be construed as a stricture on science as a way of knowing or as a way of studying

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[2]The best known and most clearly symptomatic of these attacks is that by W. H. Whyte in *The Organization Man*.

human affairs. Indeed, it may be well to repeat the earlier assertion that science is the *only* route to public knowledge that man has available. In its investigations of personality and behavior, however, science may have been limited by two factors: (1) the *Zeitgeist* within which it has operated and (2) its declaration of independence from the wisdom men have accumulated over their history. On the one hand, the sciences of behavior, dealing as they do with people and society—the things that matter most—have been pressed into the service of the liberal social ideas that both yield the rich and precious heritage of free expression and the value of the individual person and occasionally degenerate into license, irresponsibility, and sentimentality. The problems that have been chosen for investigation reflect in large part the emphasis on impulse release and the denial of authority that animated Pinel's time and flowered in the *fin-de-siècle* revolt for which Freud was a perhaps unwitting but certainly eloquent spokesman. A fascinating chore in the sociology of knowledge would be that of evaluating research in personality dynamics against the dominant values of the first half of the twentieth century. It seems at least a tenable hypothesis that the work done has been a reflection of such social themes as naturalism, a high premium placed on impulse gratification, anti-authoritarianism, and opposition to rules and conventions. Like other cultural products, behavioral science is likely, at least in its content, to embody in significant degree its milieu. Such a state of affairs is quite comprehensible, but it remains limiting.

Similarly, the technological power of science and its growth in prestige has led scientists to divorce themselves from the humanistic traditions represented in history, literature, and philosophy. This conflict is only symbolized by, not restricted to, the tension between behavioral scientists and professors in the humanities on university campuses.[3] While it is true that the humanistic traditions embody conservative as well as liberal conceptions and, like any tradition, tend to crystallize at times into bigotry and closed-mindedness, they also are the carriers of recurrent insights and ideas about the most rewarding relationships between man and man, man and society,

[3]This issue is discussed from different angles of regard and with consistent cogency by D. Riesman, *Constraint and Variety in American Education*. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1956.

and—for those who are interested—man and those Powers other than himself that he perceives in the universe. Such ideas, confused and contradictory as they sometimes are, constitute the basis for wisdom, guides evolved over history to the choices men must make in living out their lives. They represent the behavioral prescriptions in varied and often incompatible terms that define the varieties of the "good life" that the social sciences can be instrumental in achieving but which science itself cannot define.

If this reading of things has any merit, then it is obvious that a critical clarity about possible humanistic objectives and a creative hardheadedness about the methods of science must be combined if knowledge about human behavior and the potentialities of human personality is to be expanded in ways less limited by the *Zeitgeist* and more relevant to some of the issues that beset modern men. For example, it is possible to regard some of the great historical documents—the Bible, the Nichomachean Ethics, Shakespeare's tragedies—as congeries of hypotheses about the relationship of particular life styles to such effects as guilt or security, fear or joy, self-esteem or self-derogation. Similarly, one finds in such cultural records hints that may be useful in establishing criteria of normality, emotional maturity, or postive mental health—criteria which cannot be evolved from within a scientific frame of reference alone, but which must be made explicit if research on psychological and social well-being is to take a more useful turn. Still more important, the humanistic account of man's experience that these documents present abounds in theories—metaphorical in language, literary in form, and devoted to the particular case, but potentially translatable—of the self-determining character of personality. The relative utility of these theories can only be tested in the crucible of systematic and controlled observation by the methods of science. But science must be familiar with them and must attend to the task of rendering them into propositions susceptible to research and precise examination.

But there is another way in which the traditions of the humanities bear upon the business of behavioral science, and it is nowhere clearer than in relation to the crucial and poignant problem of mental health. There has been a strong tendency recently, only illus-

trated by the work of Szasz,[4] to challenge the whole notion of psychopathology and the behavior disorders as "disease states," lying within the province of psychology and the medical sciences for their study and control. In spite of the advantages of this post-Pinel position, it seems quite inconsistent with the usual and accepted concepts of disease. What are known as psychiatric disturbances involve complex problems in living that bear little resemblance to tuberculosis or smallpox. The latter entail physiological and physicochemical events which the physician observes, classifies (diagnoses), and treats from outside. The disorders of behavior, on the other hand, imply social and psychological occurrences of which the therapist, within the treatment situation, is an inevitable part. It was the perception of this truth that led Harry Stack Sullivan to characterize the work of the psychiatrist, in contrast to that of other physicians, as that of a "participant observer."

The same perception accounts for Davis's conclusion, based on a careful analysis of the mental hygiene movement, that the role of those concerned with the prevention and therapy of psychopathology is "not that of a scientist but that of a practising moralist in a scientific, mobile world."[5] Considerations of mental health are considerations of man's struggle with the problem of how he *should* live, the moral problem of how conflicting needs and values may best be reconciled within individuals and between persons and groups, the ethical problem of how a man may properly judge the "rightness" or "goodness" of his own conduct and that of his fellows. These questions of what constitutes appropriate and desirable ways of life are the traditional domain of philosophy, religion, and literature. They are *not,* by the disclaimers of many scientists themselves, the domain of science.

It is not that science is beside the point, of course. But one's goals, the criteria for the style of life that one aspires to follow, and the moral values that one espouses and lives by cannot be derived from the structure of psychology or sociology. The decisions that are required here can only come from a discriminating appraisal of human

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[4]See especially T. S. Szasz, "The Myth of Mental Illness," *The American Psychologist,* 1960, *15,* pp. 113-118.

[5]K. Davis, "Mental Hygiene and the Class Structure," *Psychiatry,* 1938, *1,* p. 65.

experience. To the extent that man is familiar with the reflected-upon grapplings of his kind with similar problems, he possesses both a richer stock of the relevant data and the techniques of thought by which to evaluate them. Clearly, neither scholarship nor intellectualism is at issue. What does seem central is the degree to which one has become a part of a tradition that emphasizes the critical examination of values in human action. Much of contemporary psychotherapy, like much of contemporary education, is willy-nilly devoted, sometimes competently and sometimes blunderingly, to aiding the individual to accept more fully his humanistic heritage.

It is well to be reminded here of Susanne Langer's wise observations:

> Because our moral life is negotiated so largely by symbols, it is more oppressive than the morality of animals . . . animals react only to the deed that is done or is actually imminent; . . . whereas we control each other's merely incipient behavior with fantasies of force . . . the power of symbols enables us not only to limit each other's actions, but to command them; not only to *restrain* one another, but to *constrain*. . . . The story of man's martyrdom is a sequel to the story of his intelligence, his power of symbolical envisagement.
>
> For good or evil, man has this power of envisagement, which puts on him a burden that purely alert, realistic creatures do not bear—the burden of understanding. . . . So he must conceive a world and a law of the world, a pattern of life, and a way of meeting death.[6]

This view applies as much to the personal situation as to the human condition generally. To a large extent, a man controls his own behavior through his envisagement of goals and the consequences of attempting their attainment. His conduct is a significant reflection of the way he has conceived the world and its law, the pattern of his life, and the way that death can best be met. This inevitable burden of understanding can at times grow unsupportable, and the traveler falls.

But the only means available for strengthening him is greater understanding. The major alternative is the view that men live out their destinies in worlds fashioned from the impersonal interaction of their genes and their environments, worlds in which they themselves exert little influence and no creativity. Attractively, such a

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[6]Susanne Langer. *Philosophy in a New Key*. New York: Mentor Books, 1954. p. 233.

conception permits the harried and lonely individual to plead irresponsibility when chivvied, as he often is, by apparently insuperable difficulties of one kind or another. But the relief born of dodging responsibility—the responsibility for implementing moral values—is short lived. It remains significant that psychotherapists, regardless of the theoretical language that they speak, typically characterize their patients as being, in some way and in some crucial segments of their lives, irresponsible and self-deluding.

In carrying the burden of understanding, the sciences of behavior can be a basic asset. Knowledge of a precise and systematic kind is clearly relevant and even essential to responsible moral criticism. The discriminative scanning of values is more effective to the degree that it is more informed, more bulwarked by the tested, public propositions about events that science—and, probably, only science—can give. But science is not an alternative to the evaluation of goals, norms, and the criteria of sanity and desirable solutions to the recurrent problems of living that men must face.

Hilaire Belloc has somewhere written a couplet that seems oddly apropos:

> Always keep ahold of nurse
> For fear of finding something worse.

In the present context, the nurse is that insistent propensity, sometimes unselfconscious and sometimes highly sophisticated, for men to act as if their fate were in their own discharge and to think discriminatingly about how they may most wisely meet their responsibility. The exercising of this propensity is the heart of the humanistic tradition. It is the job of the behavioral sciences to strengthen it and to make it more widely available to men whose burden of understanding is currently extremely heavy.

Stalin's Ghost and the Khrushchev Thaw: Soviet Historians in the Crucible

By ROBERT D. WARTH

■ The professional historian, like his peers in other scholarly disciplines, enjoys a privileged status in the Soviet Union. His income and prestige are very high by Russian standards—indeed, by any standards. His American counterpart is, in contrast, an anonymous drudge in the academic vineyards. There is, nevertheless, one serious drawback to his otherwise enviable position: he is, ideologically speaking, a captive man.

One of the unheralded tragedies of the Stalin era was the decline and near extinction of Russian historical scholarship—a flourishing and honorable discipline in Tsarist times. Perhaps the first casualty of the creeping sterility which settled upon the Soviet intellectual scene in the 1930's, history has shared the hesitant renaissance of the Khrushchev thaw. In fact, the Kremlin's attitude toward the study and philosophy of history has been a reliable barometer for some thirty years in anticipating the sinuous course of the Party line in the cultural sector. Yet the concept of free inquiry, unfettered by dogma and unrestrained by institutional pressure, remains a concept as alien to Khrushchev as it is to many Americans.

In the United States, intellectual freedom is preserved, save for occasional bouts of McCarthyism, by a variety of quasi-democratic safety devices—chiefly those of mass apathy toward ideas and a be-

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wildering array of competing stimuli. In the Soviet Union, these safeguards are not permitted to exist. The regime's official creed, Marxism-Leninism, monopolizes the communication and educational media and has become a kind of conventionalized shorthand for what once passed as creative thought. Although it is no longer fashionable to say so in the Western world, both Marx and Lenin were strikingly original thinkers for their own time and place. As far as the history of ideas is concerned, their canonization as secular prophets has rendered them a great disservice.

Neither Marx nor Lenin were historians in any formal sense, but they dealt continually with historical data, and the former espoused an economic interpretation of history with which every social scientist must come to terms no matter what his intellectual commitments. Every historian nowadays is in some degree a Marxist, just as every novelist and every psychologist is, willingly or not, a Freudian. Soviet historians are, of course, 99.44 per cent pure Marxists by definition, though for a great many their "Marxism" is a kind of ritual: a few mystic incantations in the form of appropriate quotations from the Marxist "classics" usually suffice. (In Russian, this liturgical art is known as *tsitatnichestvo* or "citation-mongering.") Even in Stalin's day, there were more than a few historians who managed to make a real contribution to knowledge by half-heartedly invoking the prescribed formula.

The patron saint of Marxist historiography in the Soviet Union until his posthumous desanctification in 1934 was Mikhail N. Pokrovsky (1868-1932). A "legal Marxist" before the Revolution, Pokrovsky had found the doors of academia closed to him after a teaching apprenticeship in a secondary school. He joined the exodus of political dissenters following the abortive revolution of 1905, returning to his homeland two months before the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917. As a trusted confidant of Lenin and the only historian of reputation in Party ranks, he became the unofficial commissar of Soviet historical studies. His own scholarship suffered, but he was an indefatigable editor of historical journals, documentary collections, and co-operative works as well as a frequent lecturer at educational institutions and the founder and leader of the Society of Marxist Historians.

Pokrovsky is remembered less for his writings than for the distinctive twist which he gave to Soviet historical thought. His major work, a four-volume history of Russia originally published prior to the First World War, is unexceptional as research and infelicitous in style. Yet it was once considered a model of Marxist history: depersonalized, schematic, and devoid of narrative content. Human beings are reduced to mere appendages of automatic economic forces. The greatest of the tsars, Peter the Great, becomes a mere agent of commercial capitalism, retaining, as Karl Radek wittily complained, "only cruelty and syphilis."

By the early thirties, it was scarcely possible for a historian to publish his findings without the Marxist imprimatur *à la* Pokrovsky. ("Bourgeois" history had survived, after a fashion, until the late twenties.) Even distinguished savants such as Eugene Tarlé and S. F. Platonov—both avowed Marxists—were muzzled, eventually arrested, and finally banished to the hinterlands.

Pokrovsky's death occurred on the eve of a new wave of conformity which made the 1920's seem in retrospect a veritable golden age of Communist liberalism. The Soviet monolith had matured. Once the Bolshevik leaders were obliged by force of circumstances to think of their country as a competing sovereign state in the international community rather than a missionary outpost for the spread of world revolution, the Pokrovsky school was inexorably doomed. To record the Tsarist past as an unrelieved vista of poverty, imperialism, and oppression was to suppress pride of country for loyalty to Marxist abstractions.

In the spring of 1934, a Party decree restored the conventional history of chronology, facts, and personality to the educational curriculum where, under the Pokrovskian aegis, it had languished in favor of a kind of class struggle sociology. Under the stress of external events which threatened the safety of the Soviet state, historians were mobilized for front line duty in the ceaseless battle of propaganda. Millions of words were marshaled to prove that Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great were semi-revolutionary forerunners of Stalin; that famous Tsarist generals such as Suvorov and Kutuzov were folk heroes; that Romanov imperialism sometimes represented beneficent expansion for the peoples concerned. Even the

early Church was honored for its civilizing mission among the heathen Slavs.

The new Stalinist dispensation was a crude but effective use of history for patriotic ends. Court historians are, after all, never in short supply whether in dictatorships or in democracies. Were this the extent of Stalin's sins against Clio, they could be dismissed as venial. But he demanded deliberate fabrication of the historical record. The Old Bolsheviks, except for the exiled Trotsky, were not only physically liquidated during the Great Purge; their past had to be tailored to fit the current Party line. If they were too important for relegation to the category of "unpersons"—individuals who simply disappeared from the pages of Soviet history without a trace—they were charged with retroactive treasons. Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Bukharin thus became anti-Leninist intriguers and capitalist spies as far back as 1917. The dead Pokrovsky had not been simply mistaken: his ideas were criminal and his disciples "enemies of the people, contemptible Trotskyist-Bukharinist agents of fascism."

Stalin's role as a revolutionary knight-errant was, in contrast, inflated beyond recognition. The official Party history, later ascribed to the dictator himself and certainly written under his close supervision, is the lowest common denominator of Stalinist historiography. Mendacious, stereotyped, and incredibly dull, the book was released in 1938 and subsequently went through many editions and tens of millions of copies. A thoroughly revised version appeared in 1959 which eliminates the Stalin cult but perpetuates many of the gross distortions of the original—still couched in that deadly Marxian argot so beloved of professional *agitprop* workers.

It was not until the onset of the cold war that the grossest historical atrocities were committed. Many will recall the juvenile campaign to demonstrate that Russians invented everything from baseball to radio-telegraphy. More serious but less colorful matters were ignored by the Western press. A revealing example of historical falsification for political purposes was the treatment accorded American and Allied intervention in Siberia in 1918-1920. The Soviet leaders have never forgotten or forgiven the "capitalists" for their armed assault upon the struggling Communist state in those years—Khrushchev again waved the bloody shirt during his

American visit in 1959—and indeed the episode was sordid enough without the necessity of exaggeration. But the role of the United States was wholy different from that of her allies, as Soviet historians readily conceded for some two decades after the event. American troops had maintained an attitude of neutrality toward the various combatants and their very presence had constituted a significant factor in holding Japanese imperialist ambitions in check. Moscow obliquely acknowledged that such had been the case by abandoning its damage claims during the negotiations leading to Washington's recognition of the Soviet regime in 1933.

In 1948, when the afterglow of the wartime alliance had faded altogether, an article in *Voprosy Istorii* ("Questions of History"), the leading Soviet historical journal, set the pattern for later diatribes accusing the United States of instigating and organizing the intervention. One of them, a dishonest but popular brochure by A. Berezkin, won a Stalin prize in 1950.

Until Stalin's death in 1953 brought the shrill tone of Soviet polemics down a few decibels, no charge was too fantastic and no language too vitriolic in the Kremlin's *ex post facto* indictment of the United States as the twentieth century ringleader of world imperialism. These were the leanest of many lean years for Soviet scholars. While Party hacks were abundantly available for the meaner chores of research and writing, few serious historical works were produced, considering the pressures involved and the inducements offered. Reputable historians obviously preferred the safer haven of editing, translating, or investigating obscure facets of local history. In the dangerous realm of Party history, work practically ceased; and the long-awaited third volume of the official history of the revolution and civil war, suspended in 1941, was not forthcoming until 1957.

The post-Stalin renascence was both modest in scope and timid in execution. The new leaders, among whom Georgi Malenkov was first among equals, were necessarily cautious, and the Party furnished no clear mandate for a general relaxation from the rigors of Stalinist orthodoxy. The cultural straitjacket of the dictator's last years, when dissent bordered on heresy and heresy bordered on treason, was nevertheless loosened almost by common consent. Diminishing

xenophobia in foreign affairs was reflected in less violent strictures on the emptiness and falsity of the Western intellectual tradition. Restrictions on travel were eased, and a delegation of Soviet historians attended the International Conference of Historical Sciences held in Rome in September 1955. Soviet participation was also secured for the UNESCO project on the history of science and culture.

The emergence of Nikita Khrushchev as the new Soviet strong man portended more momentous changes in the status quo. His celebrated "secret" speech to the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956 was in many respects a long delayed sacrificial offering to the intelligentsia, a rapidly growing strata of Soviet society much broader than the term denotes in the West. The new "power elite" had been brought into being by Stalin's ruthless drive to industrialize a backward peasant economy, and yet it continually chafed at the barbarism of a culture which it had outgrown. If one may mix one's mythological metaphors, when Khrushchev cut the Gordian knot of Stalinism he opened a Pandora's box of "revisionism" which very nearly wrecked Moscow's Communist empire.

It was Anastas Mikoyan, Khrushchev's canny Armenian subaltern, who signaled a liberal turn on the historical front at the Twentieth Party Congress. "Is it normal," he asked rhetorically, "that although almost forty years have passed since October, we have neither a short nor a comprehensive Marxist-Leninist textbook on the history of the October revolution and of the Soviet state, one that presents without embellishments not only the facade but the whole many-sided life of the Soviet fatherland?" In reality, Mikoyan was confirming a high-level decision which had been made known several weeks before at a conference of historians in Moscow, the first gathering of its kind since 1928. It was sponsored by the editors of *Voprosy Istorii,* whose previous declaration on the need to restudy Pokrovsky's works was in itself an augury of a widespread historiographical thaw. Anna M. Pankratova, the editor-in-chief and one of the few female members of the Party Central Committee, led a vigorous attack on the "dogmatism" and "scholasticism" which continued to prevail in historical studies. Stalin was unmentioned by name, but it was indeed a momentous occasion when the ***doyenne***

of Soviet historians and to all appearances a die-hard Stalinist was transformed into an apostle of liberalism.

The editorial content of *Voprosy Istorii* grew more daring after Khrushchev had proclaimed, in effect, an open season on the "cult of the individual"—the prevalent euphemism for Stalin-baiting. The March 1956 number carried a disparaging essay on the distortions and falsifications of Party history. Of the official Stalinist version it was bluntly asserted that "every statement was turned into a dead dogma." An article by deputy editor E. N. Burdzhalov on the mistakes of "Bolshevik tactics in March and April 1917" was even bolder in challenging by indirection the all-encompassing wisdom of the Party. The elevation of the "popular masses" as the creative force in the historical process threatened for a time to become a new article of Communist faith; and appeals to the authority of Lenin began to approach the cultism of the old. Willingness to criticize the mistakes of the past was, however, an encouraging sign of enlightenment even if no one ventured to probe beneath the surface for more fundamental causes of intellectual dry rot than Stalin's personality.

The cultural breathing space was disappointingly brief. The Hungarian revolution provided the Kremlin with a quick refresher course on the dangers of premature de-Stalinization. Political expediency dictated a partial retreat: Stalin, it was implied, had not been a very nice man, but he was a "great Marxist" and "fighter against imperialism."

Retrenchment in the historical field followed generalized warnings about "ideological deviationists" and the need for combating bourgeois influence in higher education. At a meeting of the Academy of Sciences in December 1956, called for the purpose of transmitting new party directives to the academic community, *Voprosy Istorii* was singled out for special censure because its editorials and articles had gone entirely too far in casting off the shackles of Party guidance. The "guilty" were called upon to make public recantation. Unexpected resistance was encountered on the editorial board, and the March 1957 issue was delayed two months while the offenders were removed from their posts and the journal placed under closer Party supervision. Burdzhalov was among the

purged; Pankratova, more amenable to party discipline, was spared.

Meanwhile, *Kommunist* (April 1957), the leading theoretical organ of the Party, laid down the new line in no uncertain terms: "For a Strict Observance of the Leninist Principle of Adherence to the Party Spirit in the Historical Sciences." Historians were served notice that they would no longer be permitted to gain "cheap popularity" by exploiting Stalin's mistakes. When the missing number of *Voprosy Istorii* finally appeared, the lead editorial obediently complained of "serious methodological errors" which had "violated the principles of Marxist-Leninist Party allegiance" and had sometimes degenerated into "bourgeois objectivism." Translated into less esoteric language, the historical profession was being told to avoid an excess of intellectual freedom. It would do well to keep in mind the "aggressive character of American imperialism," that Trotsky and the Old Bolsheviks must still be regarded as traitorous scoundrels, and that Stalin, for "all the gravity of his errors, figures as an outstanding Marxist-Leninist who played a major role in unmasking and routing the Party's enemies." In short, it was rudely reminded of Bolshevism's oldest tradition—the infallibility of the Party.

Today, chastened and outwardly reconciled to the Khrushchev line, the Soviet intelligentsia continues to act as an intangible but powerful pressure group in favor of further measures of liberalization. No startling "break through," as in 1956, seems likely; yet impressive economic gains and sensational scientific achievements—not all of them in space technology—create new vested interests on the side of cultural reform. Were it not for periodic flareups in cold war tension, Khrushchev would probably be willing to allow a gradual softening of the "hard" policy which he introduced in 1957 while fighting for his political life. But his own position, given the realities of current Soviet politics, must remain insecure; and any relaxation, either in domestic or foreign policy, leaves him vulnerable.

As long as they do not openly flout the Party mandate—*Voprosy Istorii* remains their guide in this respect—scholars may safely disregard the rigid canons of Stalinist historiography. In 1958, the Soviet press subtly marked the occasion by honoring the ninetieth anniversary of Pokrovsky's birth. New professional journals have

been founded in the formerly dangerous areas of Party history, the history of the USSR, and contemporary history. Archives, formerly open only to a favored few, are now more readily accessible (though not to foreign scholars). Officially inspired work is progressing at an accelerated pace. Unfortunately, the government's generosity in subsidizing historical research and publication has not been matched by a readiness to permit free competition in the realm of ideas.

But the prognosis, as already indicated, is not wholly discouraging. If one may hardly anticipate the rehabilitation of "bourgeois" history, a degree of tolerance based on the formula of "different roads to socialism" is a reasonable possibility during the course of the present decade.

At Coney Island

By KNUTE SKINNER

Always the horses have stopped at the top of a tune
and, lamely and tamely or tearfully lifted away,
the children have walked hand in hand with their mothers, too soon
to lie in the bars of their beds in the closing of day.

They will lie there a lifetime and dream of a merry-go-round
where the circles unwind to the songs of a lyrical land
and the horses perpetually powder the sand into sound.
They will dream although caught in their cages, caressed, hand in hand.

But I see them today on their runaway merry-go-round,
inhaling the beach and the buildings, the sea and the sky,
while their mothers are helplessly standing behind on the ground
and wringing their hearts in their hands till they've twisted them dry.

After two years of travelling in Europe, KNUTE SKINNER is now teaching technical writing at the State University of Iowa. His recent publications of poetry have been in *New Campus Writing, Odyssey, Southwest Review, Experiment,* and the London *Poetry Review.*

A Distant Drum

By JOHN ATHERTON

Q. When did you first notice this noise?

A. From the very beginning swarming sound
Crowded begging, asking if please
Wouldn't I listen, it wouldn't take long.

Q. But—

A. Then when I opened my ear I was done.
The crack of the spectrum exploding from white—
The scream of a torsion weighing a fly—
The cough of an axiom proving a point—

Q. Do you find this, ah, worse at night?

A. At night the silk line hisses from rose to rose,
And a weary death murmurs as it beads the web;
Silence drips from the holes of the stars,
And in my bed I suffocate with sound.

Q. Then it goes away in the daytime?

A. Daylight crackles through a sputtering fuse
Bursting a bomb through motionless glass:
Everything goes! Then, faint as a whisper,
At first far away, the grinding of teeth,
The rustle of wrath, sweeps in like a scythe
Through a chatter of corn.

Q. Yes. Now if you'd just—

A. Listen! A gentle hail of plankton, diatoms,
Disturbs the velvet darkness of the sea,
And I can hear the hydrochloric envy
Dissolve a solid reputation in a jar.
The slowly turning stones of a ruminating mind
Pulverize the Mozart harmonies of fact.

JOHN ATHERTON was a Fulbright Lecturer in American Literature at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, is presently Associate Professor of English at Claremont Men's College, and this year is Visiting Professor of English at Amherst College. His poetry has appeared in the *New Yorker*, *Saturday Review*, *American Scholar*, and *Yale Review*.

Q. Have you been to any other doctor?

A. Once the ear is open neither cork nor lead
Can choke persistent voices; nor can I find
A smoky murky glass to blunt the quivering crystal
Pulsing in the light.

Woman of Brown Skin

By JEANNETTE NICHOLS

Woman of brown skin
with your kettle head
Set waggily above that
flagstone smile
I wonder
how my lisping mind
would wear your darkness.
My fair hands
are inadequately spaced
according to your
smooth rhythmic brown
And my milk thighs
seem lesser panthers
than yours.
But mostly I envy
your coffee breasts
that come from your body
in such volcanic rise.
Yet blood comes into my pasture
in much the same despair
as yours
and your soft gaze
confirms our
similar loss.

"Hear" by JEANNETTE NICHOLS appeared in our Summer '60 issue and other poems have been published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Saturday Review*, N.Y. *Herald-Tribune*, and elsewhere. She is a staff member of the Graduate Program in City Planning at Yale University.

Burma and Its Army:
A Contrast in Motivations and Characteristics

By TREVOR N. DUPUY

EDITOR'S NOTE: Self-government is a precarious enterprise in nearly all the newly developing countries of the more or less "Free World." Politicians and the electorate are naturally and heavily involved in the governmental activities of these countries, but in most of them another force, the military, plays a significant, sometimes a decisive, role. The rise of Nasser in Egypt on the shoulders of his troops is well known. Too plain also to be misunderstood are such military dictatorships as those in Pakistan and Thailand. In the Congo, at the other extreme, we have recently seen what can happen when an Army is insufficiently organized and disciplined to provide any stability in the midst of political chaos. In the Middle East and in Southeast Asia in particular, national armies may uphold the established government, they may be in uneasy alliance with the ruling politicians (as in Indonesia), or they may stand by as a nonpolitical source of strength (as they appeared to do in Turkey before 1960). But in nearly all these countries the social and political role of the military has expanded well beyond the limits traditionally tolerated within the nations of the West.

In Burma, which is the country under consideration here, the role of the Army has been not only a kind of phenomenon but a phenomenon that is sharply etched on the record. From a purely military machine,

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busy attempting to provide increasing internal security against its country's insurgents, the Army in October, 1958, at the request of the nation's leading politician, was suddenly transformed into the ruling government. For seventeen months, including one extension constitutionally provided for, it performed not only the traditional duties of government but initiated a number of needed reforms. Then, in 1960, under the leadership of General Ne Win, it held old-fashioned but clean elections, and returned to the barracks.

The Burma experience may or may not be a model to imitate. (In Turkey, where months ago the Army similarly took over the reins of government for an interim period, the results to date seem much less considerable or conclusive.) But by almost any criteria, the Caretaker Government set up remarkable standards of performance.

The interesting question, to which Colonel Dupuy addresses the major part of his article, remains: How does it happen that military leaders could clearly outperform civilian leaders in tasks that are basically civilian, both groups being nurtured in and drawn from the same society? P. B.

■ On October 28, 1958, General Ne Win, commander of Burma's armed forces, assumed control of the government of the Union of Burma. On the record, the General took over as Prime Minister at the invitation of his predecessor, U Nu. The assumption of authority was completely legal and constitutional, following a unanimous nomination by Parliament. But behind the constitutional façade were other facts.

For the ten years since independence from Britain, Burma had been fighting a constant series of small wars with an amazing variety of Communist and other insurgents. The most dangerous revolutionary threats had been checked, but the insurrections were persisting—and in some cases prospering—in thousands of square miles of Burma's hinterland; ultimate success of the government seemed little closer than in 1948.

While most of her neighbors in Southeast Asia were becoming more prosperous, Burma's economy was standing still—and actually falling backward in some respects. Low living standards, combined with the depredations of the insurgents, were creating growing discontent among the people; the discontent being carefully cultivated by native and foreign Communists.

In April, 1958, a few months before General Ne Win took over, a violent political eruption had split U Nu's party—the dominant AFPFL[1]—into two violently feuding factions. Nu's political position had become extremely shaky, as he undertook a variety of desperate constitutional maneuvers to maintain a slender parliamentary majority. Meanwhile, the leaders of the two rival AFPFL factions were charging each other with corruption and all sorts of scandalous criminal offenses.

There apparently was some truth to many of these smears. But before this corruption issue had been thus raised publicly, no one had voiced any indignation, save possibly for a handful of newspaper editors and a number of less articulate Army officers.

In the early months of 1958, there had been an alarming increase in the incidence of crime throughout Burma. In fact, it had been Nu's belated efforts to combat the crime wave that had apparently precipitated the split in the AFPFL, since connections between politicians and criminals had, in some instances, been too close for comfort. Nu's efforts, however, had been largely unavailing, and crime rates had continued to soar during the year.

Administrative efficiency had steadily declined after the departure of the British in 1948. Garbage was overflowing the gutters of Rangoon streets; not even hundreds of thousands of pariah dogs could keep these mounting piles of filth under control. Squalid squatters' huts were crowding streets, parks, and any open area that the masses of unemployed, or partially employed, could find. The government apparently lacked both ability and will to cope with the mounting threats of lawlessness, pestilence, and disease in Rangoon.

Perhaps the most serious, and revealing, aspect of the situation in mid-1958 was the fact that Premier U Nu, to maintain his parliamentary majority, was rumored to be dickering with the Communist insurgents. Nu, an advocate of Burmese neutrality in the cold war, had been strongly anti-Communist at home, and had hitherto given the Army full support in its efforts to put down the insurrections. Now his precarious political situation seemed to be forcing him to

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[1]Initials standing for Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League; but no one ever uses the full name, only the initials.

reach an accommodation with the internal enemies of Burmese democracy and liberty. The most serious rumors alleged that his supporters were planning to seize control of the Army.

It has been suggested that Nu had begun to doubt the possibility of success in the long struggle he had led to establish a viable, prosperous, independent nation. Regardless of his personal attitude, there was unquestionably a growing feeling of futility, and a sense of failure, among the politically conscious segments of the population.

Burma, in short, was on the verge of political, economic, and administrative chaos when General Ne Win took over the reins of governmental authority in the fall of 1958. Regardless of form or formality of takeover, it was evident from the beginning that his self-appointed task, and that of his so-called "Caretaker Government," was to clean up the mess. There was little doubt in the minds of the people of Burma that the Army[2] had seized power on its own initiative; U Nu had been permitted to issue his invitation only so that he could save something of the little "face" he still retained. In fairness, however, it seems clear that he welcomed, and even encouraged, the Army to step in.

General Ne Win and his senior Army assistants retained the form of parliamentary government, but Army officers quickly moved in to take control of the operations of every important ministry and agency. Colonels, lieutenant colonels, majors, and even captains were soon running the responsible offices of government. Unquestionably, the military capabilities of the Army suffered from the sudden loss of its most capable officers from their normal staff and command assignments. And the military men soon revealed their lack of experience in civilian administration, banking, commerce, industrial development, and the many facets of national existence under the purview of a socialistic government.

But these officers revealed more than inexperience. They showed, possibly above all of their other characteristics, a devotion to duty such as had never been seen before in the civilian agencies they now controlled. They proved themselves to be men of integrity; those

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[2]The term Burma Army officially includes the small navy and air force, as well as the ground forces, of the Union of Burma. As used in this paper, the word "Army" is synonymous with "armed forces."

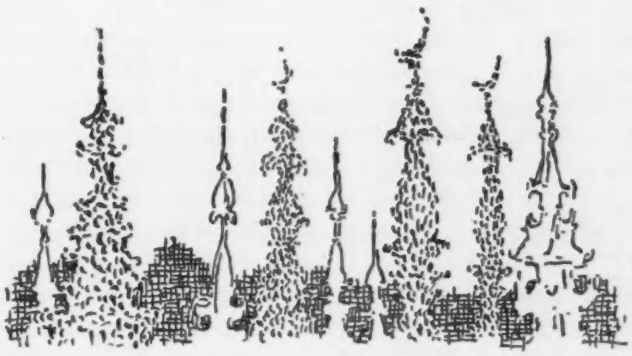
officials suspected of corruption were soon out of jobs—and some were in jail, soon to be joined by others who erroneously thought even military men had their price. Literally working night and day, these officers showed a capacity to learn that was amazing to all observers.

The military men made a number of mistakes. They were too quick to fire civil servants on flimsy grounds and without adequate investigation. They imposed some anti-corruption controls that bogged down already cumbersome bureaucratic machinery. Their frequently unnecessary ruthlessness alienated the good will of many civilians, in and out of government. But their positive accomplishments were phenomenal.

By the end of seventeen months, Burma's economy was more prosperous than ever before in her history. The insurgents, though not completely eliminated, had been reduced to small bands of harrassed bandits, kept constantly on the run and able to maintain a precarious existence only in the remote fastnesses of the mountain jungles. There was a dramatic drop in the crime rate to levels below the pre-war days under British rule. Governmental efficiency was at an all-time high. Rangoon was a clean, healthy city; garbage was collected regularly; the former squatters were resettled in newly created, carefully planned satellite towns ringing the national capital.

In February, 1960, for the first time in its independent existence, Burma had honest elections. The measure of the honesty is the fact that—somewhat to the Army's chagrin—U Nu won an overwhelming electoral victory against opponents who had made the mistake of trying to identify themselves with the military reform movement. Nu, one of the true political geniuses of the twentieth century, had been able to recognize and to capitalize on the easy-going Burman's growing resentment of the ruthlessness and efficiency of military rule.

Ne Win and his colonels could have retained their political power indefinitely, as the military have done in many other countries of Asia and the Middle East. It is interesting to speculate on the motives which inspired them to relinquish—on April 1, 1960—their virtual dictatorship, and to install the popularly elected representatives of an apparently immature people. Pertinent to such speculation were two rumors then current in Rangoon. It was suggested that some of the colonels were reluctant to surrender power,



since they felt that the job was still unfinished. At the same time, General Ne Win is reputed to have been anxious to get his colonels out of government before they became "entrenched."

But before speculation along these lines, a basic question needs to be answered:

Why does the Army differ so markedly, and in so many respects, from the society from which it was drawn?

A Burmese scholar now head of the Department of Psychology of the University of Mandalay, U Sein Tu, has written an objective study of the ideology and personality of his people which reveals much about the nature of Burmese society.[3] Selecting some key words from the study, he characterizes his compatriots as "lawless," "anarchistic," "predatory," "easy-going," "impulsive," "fun-loving," "friendly," "gamblers," "superstitious," "careless," "irresponsible," "child-like," "smug," and "self-satisfied." (He mentioned some other characteristics, to which we shall return.) This assessment of Burmese nature is generally consistent with the observations of foreign residents, who would probably emphasize friendliness, irresponsibility, lack of discipline, and carelessness. If these are, in fact, the dominant characteristics of Burmese society, it is not hard to understand the situation existing in the country in 1958.

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[3]"Ideology and Personality in Burmese Society." Manuscript, 57 pp. Though unpublished, the study has been drawn upon by a number of other scholars in Burma and abroad. It was written several years ago at Harvard while the author was working on his doctorate.

How then can one account for the qualities of the Army officers who ran the country for seventeen months? Everyone agrees that these men were efficient, that they had intense devotion to duty, that they were extremely hard-working, serious, and dedicated. Thus the differences in the natures of Burmese society and of Burma's Army are great and clearcut. The politicians and administrators who ran Burma before 1958 were obviously representative of Burmese society in general; the Army officers of the Caretaker Government were distinctly non-representative.

No such distinction between the military and civilian society—or its leadership—exists in Western nations, despite vague references to the existence of a "military mind." That term of disparagement, incidentally, implies an inherent military reactionism, sluggishly and stupidly lagging behind civilian society; quite the opposite from the progressive, alert leadership characteristics so notably displayed by the military in Burma.

There have been suggestions that these characteristics may be due to the ancestry of leading officers of the Burmese Army. Some of these are reputed to have generous admixtures of the blood of supposedly more dynamic people such as the Chinese and Indians, who are considered to have proven their greater competence by excelling in commercial pursuits in Burma; for instance, General Ne Win is reputed to be half Chinese.

There is almost certainly no greater proportion of Chinese or Indian ancestors among the military leadership than there is in any other group of Burmese leaders. There has been some intermarriage between Burmese and Chinese, as well as between Burmese and Indians, but the racial-linguistic groups tend to retain their identity, and there do not appear to be any effects of intermarriage on the social characteristics we have noted among the dominant Burmans. Certainly there does not seem to be any basis for drawing a racial distinction between the Army officers and their civilian political counterparts, whose origins are practically identical. This is a conclusion reached by Dr. Lucian Pye of Massachusetts Institute of Technology in a study written while the military were still in power: "Indeed, the majority of the twenty-three colonels who are now leading the government were at one time either politicians or close associates of politicians." He also demonstrates conclusively the social

homogeniety of the military and political leadership of the country.[4] Thus there is nothing in heredity or culture which could explain the great differences in attitudes and in administrative efficiency which exist between the military and civilian leadership of Burma.

Despite social homogeneity, these differences seem to be greater in Burma than in any of the other Eastern Hemisphere countries that have come under military rule—with the possible exception of Pakistan. Some observers have jumped to the conclusion that both Pakistan and Burma inherited the standards and ideas of British military professionals as a result of long colonial association. Unquestionably Ayub Khan and his senior officers, most of whom wear "old school ties" from Sandhurst, Woolwich, and Camberly, are true heirs of Britain's splendid military traditions, and this heritage is probably a major motivation in the reforms they are instituting in their country.

But this is emphatically not true of Burma, where the British raised only a few battalions before World War II—and these exclusively from the non-Burman[5] hill tribes such as the Kachins and Chins. The Army today is truly and intensively Burmese, and is predominantly Burman. Though it still contains a few officers who served under the British, its origin is the Burma Independence Army raised by General Aung San in 1941 and 1942 for the purpose of revolt against the British. The average Burmese officer would probably consider that his army owes as much to Yugoslav or American or Israeli military influence as it does to British.[6]

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[4]Lucian W. Pye, "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization," paper prepared for presentation to a meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 1959, 21-22.

[5]There is no consistent practice in use of the terms "Burman" and "Burmese." This writer has always accepted the word "Burman" as referring to a member of the dominant and majority people of the country, speaking the Burmese tongue; save in this linguistic sense, the word "Burmese" would then apply to all the indigenous people of Burma, including Burmans. That is the sense in which the words are used here. Hugh Tinker, in his *The Union of Burma*, Oxford, 1959, uses these words in exactly the opposite sense, though admitting that the practice "cannot be regarded as definitive."

[6]British influence is perhaps slightly more pronounced in the Burmese Navy and Air Force than in the ground forces; the effect of this is insignificant, however, due to the relatively small size and minor roles of these services.

It has also been suggested that the nature of military life requires soldiers to be men of action as well as devotees of administrative routine and that, as a consequence, they tend to do things more efficiently and with less procrastination than their unregimented civilian brethren. There is possibly a modicum of truth to this, yet it is hard to see how regimentation and administrative routine—in themselves tending to stultify progress and to preserve the *status quo*—can explain the dynamic, imaginative, progressive impact of Burma's Army on the country's creaking economy and shaky governmental structure.

A more persuasive explanation of the reasons for the distinctions between Army and society is given by Pye. He suggests that the armies of underdeveloped countries are the most modernized and technologically advanced groups in their national societies. In order to handle the relatively modern weapons with which they have equipped themselves, they have perforce received considerable training in modern industrial skills from foreign experts—and much of this has been in the foreign countries. Also, in order to handle the complex weapons systems, these armies have had to adopt the kinds of organizations and staff systems which exist in the armed forces of more advanced nations. As a consequence of these internal military developments, Pye believes, the armed forces officers of the underdeveloped countries have had an opportunity to observe conditions elsewhere and then to consider such matters in the intellectually stimulating atmosphere of their own staffs. The result has been to make them more acutely aware of the economic, technological, and sociological backwardness of their own societies and to make them anxious to have such backwardness corrected. With specific reference to the assumption of power by the Burmese Army in 1958, Pye believes that it was this accelerated modernizing process in the Army, combined with its unity in the face of a disintegrating political situation, which impelled the soldiers to seize power and to undertake immediate reforms.

To these thoughts should be added Dr. Samuel Huntington's ideas on the three characteristics of military professionalism.[7] The

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[7]Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, Harvard, 1957, 11-18.

first of these is *expertise*—the special skills and knowledge which the officer must have to perform his military duties. Certainly professional mastery of the technical aspects of "the management of violence" would not explain the military's ability to run an efficient, honest government. On the other hand, *expertise* includes organization, equipping, training, planning, and direction of forces in various kinds of operations in and out of combat. The intellectual effort and practical experience through which the officer obtains such skills would certainly go far toward preparing him to handle a variety of administrative jobs in government, even though the specific tasks might be totally dissimilar to his previous military duties.

Next is the professional's responsibility to society. In the military man, this is demonstrated by his sense of duty to the state, and usually exemplified also by the officer's code of conduct and by his avoidance of involvement in political activities. This sense of duty would permit an officer to take prompt, ruthless, and effective action to accomplish his mission, with no thought—as the politician would be likely to have—of avoiding unpleasant or unpopular measures.

The corporate characteristic—third aspect of professionalism—is symbolized by the uniform, which sets the military group distinctly apart from the remainder of society. This group distinction provides a basic unity which is enhanced by the chain of command and by the inherent discipline of the military.

Like other professions, the military tend to be conservative as a group, but not thereby necessarily hidebound. Their conservatism, discipline, adaptability, and sense of responsibility are all characteristics consistent with the manner in which the officers of the Caretaker Government performed their mission. These professional characteristics, taken together with the modernizing process noted by Pye, would seem to explain the success of the Army in that mission.

Obviously the professionalism of the leaders of the Burmese Army did not automatically come into being when they put on their uniforms. Nor could the differences between the Army and Burmese society have developed in ten short years through a simple evolutionary process. It is clear, rather, that the startling changes have

been the direct result of a response to grave challenge. This has been the continuous warfare against the insurgents, in which the Army had literally been fighting for its life for the decade before 1958.

It has been "survival of the fittest" in more ways than one. There is, above all, the elemental consideration in warfare that one must kill or be killed, and that efficiency in combat is the best assurance of remaining alive. And the capable unit leader, who wins battles and who incurs minimum casualties in the process, is inevitably rewarded. Furthermore, in war the high command must think selfishly of its own reputation, as well as in terms of lives and national existence. Motivation, therefore, is selfishly personal as well as based on more noble considerations. With so much at stake, those in positions of responsibility can award advancement only on the basis of merit. At the same time, the bungler or the leader who is careless or lazy cannot be tolerated in the organization. If he survives his mistakes, he will be purged or demoted from responsibility.

Such a state of affairs has several direct, and mutually supporting, effects upon a military organization. In the first place, the most able men will soon come to the top. And in the process, with lives often hanging in the balance, these men develop an obsession for efficiency, for prompt, direct action to take care of any situation, under any circumstances. They expect their subordinates to have similar qualities and to respond with equal decisiveness to challenge. And though such experience makes men ruthless, it also engenders understanding of mistakes made through zeal, as well as intolerance of errors of omission. This has always been the experience of any army in a prolonged war.

In a dynamic people, the result is merely to intensify among the military certain qualities inherent in the society. (American, German, and Japanese examples come readily to mind.) In a more easy-going environment, such as Burma, the process is not really different, it is simply more dramatic. The men who have forged to the top in combat in the Army would probably have been successful in civilian life. But they would have been scattered through the community rather than being gathered in a unified, professional command structure. And individually they would have been less likely to have acquired a comparable sense of mission, or as much self-confidence, or the ability to adapt themselves readily to deal with all kinds of situations.

It is interesting to compare the Burmese situation with those in other Asiatic countries where the military have held power, and where distinctions between armies and societies appear to be less pronounced. The Burmese Army has had more tempering in the fire of combat than most of the others. But perhaps equally important are certain latent qualities possessed by the Burmese as a people. This is brought out in the sociological study by U Sein Tu. He says that his people are essentially "war-like"; they are also "aggressive," "violent," "proud," and "co-operative." (He also mentions "arrogance," "cruelty," and a tendency to "swaggering," traits which military life possibly brings out amongst soldiers of all nationalities, but which is very obvious in the drivers of the Burmese military vehicles.) The history of Burma would certainly support the idea that, despite their easy-going nature, the Burmese appear to have a latent martial spirit which causes them to take readily to war and to the military life.

Of course, the insurgents also receive the benefit of this latent martial spirit. This undoubtedly contributes to the difficulties the Army has had in completely suppressing the insurrections, difficulties which have led some observers to question its military efficiency. It should be remembered, however, that the might of the British Empire was unable ever to establish complete peace in the remote jungle regions of Burma. And though the Army is not satisfied with its own incomplete accomplishments, most people are willing to accept gratefully the law and order it has brought to all of the populated regions of the country.

Whether or not the Army could do a better job against the insurgents is open to doubt. The military leadership seems to feel—with some justification—that they have achieved about all they can militarily. They believe that the final elimination of the insurrections will require long-term actions of a political, a psychological, a social, and an economic nature, and they are doing their best to push such actions by appropriate agencies of government. Despite this perceptive assessment of the present non-military nature of the insurgent problem, the results of the recent election campaign conclusively confirmed Dr. Pye's comment that "the Army has shown itself remarkably insensitive to the essential features of a democratic political process."

Yet in this political ineptitude, the Burmese Army is demonstrat-

ing a typical trait of dedicated military professionalism. The Army apparently does not want to improve its political sense; consciously or intuitively, its leadership seems to sense that its strength and virtues are derived from its military professional characteristics. This would account for the alacrity with which they returned the government to the politicians. Another, related, reason is probably their realization that the Army's professional resources in high-quality educated manpower are stretched dangerously thin, even when attention is devoted solely to military duties.

It is difficult to forecast what such an Army would do if internal conditions should again deteriorate to the level of 1958. There is wide speculation on this in Rangoon, and it is possible to hear every conceivable answer from well-informed Burmese and foreign observers. But the Army, apparently, has other things on its collective mind. As far as anyone can tell, it has returned its full attention to the partly-neglected military tasks of internal and external security and to rebuilding the professionalism which inevitably suffered during the seventeen months of non-military activity.

The Army is aware that some critics consider that it is neither equipped nor organized to defend the country against aggression. (There is only one conceivable aggressor: Communist China.) Apparently its leadership is taking serious measures to reduce such deficiencies. Certainly it has proven its capability and resiliency in its generally successful guerilla campaigns—the most difficult of all kinds of warfare. It has demonstrated these same qualities in the jungle of Burma's government. It is a proud army; as proud of its typically Burmese war-like qualities as it is proud of those other qualities which distinguish it so sharply from Burmese society.

One serious question is whether the Army can maintain its professionalism, its efficiency, and its dynamic efforts to improve itself, without the challenge of combat. There is much in Burmese history, and in the inherent nature of Burmese society, to suggest that this may be doubtful. Possibly the Burmese Army would be defeating itself by gaining a complete victory over the insurgents.

The Money

By WARREN BECK

■ He came around the corner into a blaze of business-district lights that dazzled him after the gloom of the street he lived on. Back there always a few apartments would be completely black, and blinds down at most other windows in the four-story rows facing each other along the block of brick fronts. Doorways were dimly lit and entry steps so exactly alike it was a help to count off, finding your way back later in the dark. Or maybe he even ought to stretch a thread, like the fellow in some story he half-remembered from school. But what would he want with a thread behind him, he was too tied down anyhow. As to what was ahead, maybe he didn't know his way around but he was finding out. He couldn't say exactly what, but he felt himself picking up some kind of know-how, something you breathed in with the city air.

He was ready for it, too. He'd grown up in that block of run-down apartments, and their only move he could remember had been from the third floor to the second, to save his mother's heart on the stairs. That change suited him. Even from the third floor you couldn't see out beyond the street, except up into the blank sky, and now he could get away faster down the one flight, and coming back you didn't feel so late as with two to climb. Not that they weren't always yacking at him anyhow—his father and mother and especially his older sisters both at once—wanting to know where he'd been and what he'd been up to. How could he explain all that? They wouldn't know if he told them. Like tonight.

An article by WARREN BECK appeared in the first issue of the *Antioch Review* twenty years ago and other articles and stories of his have appeared here since. Professor of English at Lawrence College, Mr. Beck is the author of three volumes of short stories and three novels, as well as numerous critical essays.

He blinked his eyes again at the glare of neon from the store fronts, restaurants, and bars that crowded solid both ways here. He drifted down the street, wondering what movies were on, but sour about that, too, because he had not one thin damn dime on him. He walked slowly along and then stopped by a hardware store, closed, with darkened windows. Bending his head to the glass, he peered at a display of kitchen knives. Even through dimness they gleamed in their definite pointed shapes, and their still sharpness excited him somehow. Lifting his head to look further into the store, he met his reflection, almost like bumping into a stranger. He took a step back and looked himself over. The levis were all right, tight enough on his legs—but Jeeze, he was skinny. The leather jacket would do. But even in this kind of mirror those damned pimples showed. Other guys his age had them too, but that didn't make it any better.

His sisters kept saying if he'd only wash once in a while. Then they'd go on and tell him just because they lived where they did he didn't need to be a bum like most kids on that street, so why go slouching around like a greasy juvenile delinquent with his hair in his eyes. All that because sometimes he didn't wash when he would be late for vocational school. It was bad enough having the pimples without two yacking sisters reminding you. And then his father would glare at him, like he'd done something, when he hadn't, he'd never tangled with the cops the way some guys his age already had, more than once. And his mother would sigh like she was sorry for herself and all the rest of them, and would try to change the subject, but that never got them anywhere either.

He came back to the reflection of himself waiting in the window; he saw trouble in his eyes and felt what lay behind it. If he didn't have these pimples and if he had any money he could get some clothes, and most of all he could get a girl, whenever he wanted to. He turned away from himself in the glass and stood half-facing the street. Maybe he could get a used car, even, if he had some dough. And with a car the girls came easy, and you could get away somewhere, over to the other side of the city in no time, or out of town even. All you needed was the money. Yeh, that was all.

Maybe he should quit vocational school, he thought, looking back down at the knives. Maybe he could find some way of grabbing onto a fast buck. But the law would be on him if he ducked school

now, and some day the army might be herding him in, so what was the use trying to get an edge. He did hope he could have some fun before the army. That was going to be hell, from what he'd heard—sergeants yacking at you and working you to death and there wasn't any out. But you did have your pay, and there were plenty of women around the camps, the guys always said. Even so, he wasn't rushing into any army deal. He'd wait till they came after him. Maybe he'd be 4-F, like a lot of the guys on his street were.

He started on. He halted outside a bar called Augie's. At the far end of the place, high up, the television was going; he could see it plain, past the heads that mostly weren't turned that way. It looked like a whodunit, with a body on the floor and a guy in a snap-brim hat poking around, but what was it if you couldn't heard the words? When the fights were on you could watch through the window, but the other shows, Westerns too, only made you mad to look and not hear it. And if he tried to sneak in, they'd spot him and bounce him.

He went on slowly, as far as the big drug store. Through the wide window he saw the soda fountain stools all filled, mostly young guys and girls, some pretty well dressed and all looking so damned sure of themselves. The radio was going loud inside; he could hear some dame singing that way they always had, so it didn't matter if you couldn't hear the words, it was how the dame's voice would slide and quiver and moan, sort of. He wanted to go in and look at the girl pictures on the paperbacks in the book rack that turned, but he couldn't make up his mind—if they thought you weren't going to spend anything they'd tell you to move on, right in front of everybody else.

A squad car slid past, slow enough so that turning he saw two extra cops in the back seat. He walked on a little faster, wondering if what they were out for could be right up ahead, or if they were just having themselves a ride. A soft life, barging around in a car they gave you and kept full of gas, and stepping on the siren to make everybody get out of your way, and if you did get into a jam you could let the other guy have it and call it resisting an officer. Or better still, guys would slip a cop a bundle of dough to keep clear of the law, like he'd heard the older fellows say. So maybe there was something to being a cop. But you had to pass exams. And have some kind of pull, too. Something was always fencing things off.

And then these damned cops that knocked down plenty would put on a straight face and shove you around when you hadn't even done anything.

At the movie house he swung past the people shuffling toward the ticket window and stopped to look over the poster. He couldn't figure what it was about, except two guys after the same dame. She was something to go for too, and what she had sure was spread all over that poster, a lot larger than life. Jeeze, what would a guy have to have to get hold of something like that? Plenty, he admitted. And he didn't even have the price of going in and looking at this doll on the screen. Staring into her enormous eyes, he stuck out his tongue and made what he meant for a dirty disgusted sound. He turned with a swing of shoulder and hurried away as fast as he could in the sidewalk flow of all those easy-going people out for a good time. He felt himself on the trail of something without knowing what. He felt, too, something unnamed perhaps trailing him. Here in all this light, among all these people, he felt a kind of wildness in him and around him.

He crossed fingers on both hands and wished he'd find a half dollar. Or even two bits—make it two bits, he whispered to himself and into the air. If he only had a beer he'd feel better—a beer or two. He must have been talking out loud, because two girls he hadn't noticed were laughing at him passing. He stared after them; they were going on but glancing back, grinning like a pair of bitch monkeys and jabbering at each other, making fun of him, of course. Damn them, if he had some money they'd be different. There was always a price on everything, and if you didn't have the price you were out of it.

He walked on, wondering if he could maybe ask some guy for a buck and get away with it. Pick one that looked like an easy touch and tell him—what do you tell a guy that's maybe got a buck or two to spare, and how would you pick him out? Maybe your best chance would be someone out with a doll—he wouldn't want to look cheap. But what if a cop—they were all over the place tonight, here was another squad car pulling up at the intersection, with two in front and two more in back in plain clothes that must have been detectives because then one of them got out and talked through the front window like giving orders.

So he'd turn off from where the cops were so thick and cut over several blocks to the next main drag. If he was going to hit somebody for a buck or two, he'd better be out of his own neighborhood. What a squawk they'd raise at home if it leaked back he'd been seen going around with his hand out. And maybe over on the other avenue he could pick up a girl, somebody better than those two giggling tramps he'd just passed.

The side street he'd turned into seemed damned dark after all that brightness. There were regular houses here, with grass and sometimes shrubbery in front, and light from windows barely reached out to the sidewalk. He passed a couple of men, one after another, but he couldn't see them plain enough to tell whether they might come across. Here in the dark it would be tricky, too. They might think you were trying to stick 'em up, and wouldn't that be something, if a guy grabbed you and filed charges. Teenager turns bandit and his pimply mug in the paper and a stretch in the reformatory, all because he'd just asked for a measly buck and the guy misunderstood. It would be no use trying to explain. So he'd better wait till he got into some light where he'd know what he was doing.

Going on in the darkness, thinking about what he'd seen in the movies, he held his hands forward with his first fingers stuck out and thumbs cocked, ready to fire, walking on as if closing in. By a small tree he stopped and threw his arms around it and his legs caught the trunk in a scissors, and he closed his eyes and saw the girl on the movie poster. The bark scratched his face; he stopped that and went on. He cocked the gun of his raised right hand now, ready to have it out in this dark with anybody. Then he dropped his arm and was himself, seeing someone coming through the patch of light at the next corner. He could just make out the shadowy figure, a short stocky fellow, who seemed to be in a hurry and kept glancing back into the blank dark.

Maybe that was what did it; anyhow, the guy saw him too late and tried to go around on the left and they slammed into each other. He grabbed out at the little man to keep his balance, and the guy said "Okay-okay now just a minute" in a fast scared voice and looked back down the street like a fellow hoping for help, maybe. Then he reached inside his coat and handed over a long envelope thick and soft with whatever was in it—pushed it into his hands and

ducked off and was out of sight like a rabbit in the shadows between houses.

As he stood astonished with that envelope in his hands, he saw it, the car coming slowly, with spotlights sweeping the front yards on both sides, and he barely had time to flop down behind some shrubbery. He kept low while the police car crawled by and turned off at the intersection. He waited and watched both ways but he saw nothing, nobody. He got up and found himself still holding that envelope, and now he could begin to wonder what the hell this was all about. He hurried on to the next street lamp; there was still nobody around; in the circle of light he opened the envelope. It was full of money. Crisp, clean money. Fives, all fives, it looked like, and a wad of them. He was as dizzy as if he'd been spinning around too fast and then his head cleared but he was trembling all over, chilly but not from cold, and couldn't stop.

"Jeeze," he whispered, and felt his teeth clicking and heard them too. "All this dough! Jeeze, I'm rich!"

He took out two of the fives, then another, then two more, and put them in his jeans pocket, where he'd never had anything like that much money before. Then he stuffed the still-fat envelope into his jacket pocket, turning it crosswise to hold it. He went on along the street, stepping light, almost running toward the other avenue. He'd celebrate for sure, he'd do whatever he damn well pleased now. The guy must have been crazy, handing it over just like that, but he hadn't asked him for it, so it was his now. He noticed himself muttering aloud, half out of breath from hurrying and the excitement, and he slowed and looked around and back to see if anybody might have spotted him, but there was no one close, and little to see except the glow still several blocks ahead, at the next arterial, a bright patch like the end of a tunnel.

Suddenly into that opening there swept a shape approaching, with lights raking the sidewalks—another squad car. He ran in on a lawn and dropped down behind a bush, just before the beam played over the stretch. The car went on slowly. He let himself hope it was just a routine patrol. He got up and ran toward the street's outlet that seemed more than ever an escape from a cave, a trap. He was breathing hard now and his heart pounded in his throat. He slowed down; if he charged onto that busy street out of breath and panting, he'd look suspicious if any cop happened to be there. He strolled around the corner into the light and the sidewalk crowd and traffic noise and looked this way and that. No cops. Close by was a liquor store; he made for it but then paused. No use trying, he couldn't pass himself off as of age. This was one to figure. He went on by with only a glimpse into the store window and stopped; he leaned back against a stretch of blank wall and waited, watching. When he saw the ragged old fellow come shuffling along, he knew he had it made. A bum for sure, and one he could handle—just the character for a deal like this.

"Psst," he said, like calling a dog.

The old guy slowed down still more and circled over with a humble sort of questioning look. He glanced both ways before he spoke.

"What you want, bud?"

"Pint of whiskey," he told him. "That kind in the window, for two-fifty."

The old fellow began shaking his head, but he broke in on that.

"Wait a minute. I'm giving you five bucks; you can buy me a pint and you a pint. You want it or don't you?"

He held out his hand, turned down, with the bill crumpled in it. The bum looked up and down the street again; then he reached for the money and went sliding into the store. Before long he came out, with something in a paper bag held up against his side. For a second it seemed he might take off the other way; then he turned like a scow in a change of current, drifted past and handed over the bag without pausing or a word or a look, and sidled right on along the street at what must have been his top clip and was out of sight in the moving crowds.

Here by the liquor store window it was too light to bring the bottle out; he just stripped off the sack and stuck the pint into the pocket of his leather jacket. So that's how you could do it, he told himself. So that's how easy things came if you had a little dough to operate with. What you couldn't do yourself or didn't want to do, you hired some dope to do it for you. He stood feeling the bottle hard against his body and knew what else he was waiting for, some girl. And here came two, arm in arm, strolling along in an easy way that as good as said they were out to be picked up. They were sort of sloppily dressed and they looked about fifteen, young enough for him. One of them, the blonde, was real pretty, too.

"Psst," he said as they were passing.

They wheeled toward him and stopped but didn't say anything, they just looked him over and waited. He felt his throat dry as he spoke.

"How about—how about a coke?"

The brunette looked at her partner but the blonde stared right back at him for a second.

"Okay," she said at last, still with a straight face, and he saw she wasn't putting out any smiles till she knew what this was all about.

"Sure," the brunette chimed in, but kind of weakly, as if she knew nobody was asking her.

"Okay, then," he said, trying to make it loud and firm, and still looking the blonde in the eye. "Where you want to go?"

She batted her eyes and seemed to be thinking of a lot of possibilities but she said maybe the best place would be in the next block.

"Let's go, then," he said, and stepped around to get with the blonde.

They started down the street, the three of them abreast, without a word. At the crossing he took the blonde's arm and held it while they waited for the light to change. She didn't pull away, so he tightened his grip as they hurried across, and kept it as they went on.

"You from this part of town?" she asked. "I never seen you around before."

He was surprised at how easy it came, like something answering for him.

"Naw, I'm from way over on the other side. Just come over to see what the city's like around here. Just decided to find out was there any pretty girls along this drag."

The blonde turned her eyes on him as she let him lead her along, and he wondered if he was saying things the right way, and then he guessed she was waiting for something more, but he let her take it.

"Aren't there pretty girls over where you live?" she finally asked.

"Sure," he said. "Lots of 'em. I know quite a few. But I like to get around."

"That's a fellow's privilege, I guess," the blonde said, looking straight ahead now.

"Sure," he told her. "Don't you like to get around too? Go places, do things?"

"Sure," she answered, looking back at him. "All the time."

They walked on and still the brunette hadn't said a word.

"Here it is," the blonde said. "It's not bad."

He held the door for them; the brunette slipped in first and let the blonde come in with him. It was a big drug store, full of fancy display cases. As he followed the girls he saw the blonde take a quick look at a cosmetics and perfume display. They went to a booth near the back of the long room. The girls slid in, one on each side of the table; then he sat down next to the blonde, coming in as close as he could without crowding her.

"Well, what'll you have?" he said heartily. "How about double cokes? Better order cokes, kids, and then I'll rough 'em up for you."

"Huh?" the blonde said.

He pulled the bottle far enough out of his pocket for her to see

and then shoved it out of sight as the middle-aged, sour-looking waitress came toward their booth.

"Your order taken?" she asked flatly.

"Double coke for me," he said.

"Same here," the blonde said, and then turned her eyes to him with a little smile over the secret they already had.

The waitress was giving a hard look at the brunette, who frowned and moved nervously and then came out with it in a timid voice.

"Could I have a root beer?"

"We got root beer," the waitress told her. "Large or small?"

"Large," he ordered quickly "And hurry it up."

"You'll get it," said the waitress as she turned away.

He frowned at her back as she plodded toward the fountain; he knew the two girls were watching him. He turned and looked at the blonde.

"What's your name, honey?" he asked softly.

"Shirley," she said, and nodded across the table, "and that's Irma. What's yours?"

"Gregory," he told her, not having planned it that way, but knowing as he spoke that he had to have something better than his own name.

"Gregory," Shirley was saying, slow and sort of dreamily. "Like Gregory Peck, huh?"

"Well, same name, that's all," he said, trying to make it sound like he was used to having folks reminded of the movie actor, and thinking too how easy things came to you as you went along, so he added they were no relation, and found Shirley looking at him through narrowed eyes as if thinking he was holding back something really big about himself.

He pulled the bottle out of his pocket, held it down between Shirley and him and got the screw-cap loose. The girls watched in silence. Then Shirley spoke up.

"How'd you grab onto that?"

It was plain she meant he didn't look old enough to get away with buying it himself.

"Oh, I know ways of getting what I want," he told her, and holding the bottle in one hand, he pressed the other against the

lumped envelope still there in his jacket pocket, no dream, the real stuff that got you everything else, and he thought of bringing out the whole bundle and flashing it on Shirley, but something told him he mustn't, he'd better play it trickier than that, and besides, here the waitress was coming.

He sat up straight and shoved the bottle down between them, holding it out of sight and feeling the back of his hand pressed tight against the softness of Shirley's leg. The waitress set down their double cokes and Irma's large root beer, laid straws beside the glasses, dropped the check in the center of the table, and turned away with a still stony face. The girls picked up their straws and took their first sips.

"That's right," he said, "better make some room in the glass."

He drank slowly, though, only a few small swallows out of the glass, and didn't bring out the bottle yet, watching not to be caught with it, but mainly not wanting to take his hand away where Shirley hadn't moved at all. He knew he had to go ahead, though, after what he'd started, and besides he did want the liquor. So he stealthily brought out the bottle, sliding his hand away from Shirley's leg, and poured a big splash of the whiskey into his glass, and turned toward Shirley's with it.

"Don't give me that much," she whispered. "I might not like it. Mixed with coke, I mean."

"You mean you drink it straight, I s'pose," he whispered back, trying to sound scornful and funny too, while he carefully poured a trickle into her glass until she put out a finger and tipped the bottle back up.

"I do not drink it straight," she said. "I meant with cokes you put in rum usually, don't you? I thought it was ginger ale you put whiskey in."

He knew she was probably right and probably knew more about it than he did, but he wasn't going to let on to that.

"Naw," he told her, and then thought of a way to say it. "Whiskey and coke, that's okey-doke."

"Oh," said Shirley, and he couldn't tell what she meant, so he looked across the table.

"Here, Irma, let me rough up that root beer for you. Shove over your glass."

The girl just looked at him darkly out of big sad eyes and shook her head.

"Irma is strictly for root beer," he remarked scornfully.

He screwed the bottle-cap on and put the bottle down again between his leg and Shirley's, with the back of his hand pressed against her the same way, and she didn't move, so he guessed it was all right and was going to be all right. He picked up his glass with his free hand, took a long pull on his coke and whiskey, and felt it go down strong and spread in him quick, like a stain on a dry blotter. Shirley was sipping away at hers too, and then she turned her head and gave him a smile.

"Not bad, huh?" she said, and her voice sounded like a cat purring.

"Not bad at all," he answered huskily, letting his eyes brush down over her face and body, and she gave him another smile, a smaller one this time, but it seemed to say more, and he thought this is it, you got dough you can get liquor, you got liquor it loosens up the dames for you.

They went on with their drinks. Irma was sipping her root beer slowly but steadily and was getting to the bottom of it. Still she hadn't said a word. This Irma, Shirley must have brought her along not to be on the street by herself; Irma might be better than nothing, that way, but otherwise she was worse than nothing. He wondered how he could get rid of her. She would give them a solemn look once in a while, but then she'd hunch over her root beer again and act like trouble with her straw. He swigged the last of his coke; then he brought out the bottle and poured some whiskey over the crushed ice in his glass—not too much, but trying to make it look careless. He turned to Shirley.

"Have some more, kid," he said, fast and low to make the most of the sweet dangerous secret.

Shirley stared at him sort of dreamily before she answered.

"Well, maybe a little more. But not like what you took."

He poured carefully into her glass, and then again she reached one finger and pushed the bottle back up.

"That enough?" he said, making it sound as if he couldn't believe it. "You might as well have more, because Irma here don't want any. Irma is strictly for—"

He paused and let his eyes bore into the girl across the table while he screwed on the bottle-cap.

"Strictly for root beer, that's Irma," said Shirley, teasingly, and with that purring sound in her voice too.

He put the bottle back in the same place and this time Shirley's leg pressed against the back of his hand as she brought her shoulder close to his.

"We got to keep it hid, don't we?" she said and winked at him.

Now that Shirley was on his side, he knew what he'd do.

"Listen, Irma," he said, and heard the strangeness in his voice as part of the tingling going all through him, from the whiskey and having Shirley so close. "I got a proposition for you, Irma."

"Oh, what he said!" Shirley giggled. "Maybe you better not listen to him, Irma. Because I'll tell you why, he's been drinking."

While Shirley was saying all this she was pressing against him still closer, and that made him more certain. With his free hand he fished out one of the bills and flattened it on the table.

"Irma, here's the proposition," he said. "Here's this five dollars for you if you'll do what I want you to."

"Oh, Irma!" Shirley cried out. "You're in business!"

Irma was looking at him steadily and sullenly, almost as if she hated him.

"It's simple, what I want," he went on. "No harm in it and you can do it easy."

She was motionless for a minute, staring at him, and then her tongue slowly moistened her lips.

"What is it?" she asked in a low and bitter tone.

He pushed the five-dollar bill across the table toward her.

"Beat it," he said. "Get lost."

Her face turned red and her eyes dropped. Then she started to get out of the booth.

"The money, Irma," said Shirley softly. "Take the money, it's yours."

Irma reached out and took the bill without looking at either of them and walked away. He watched her disappear among people in the front part of the drug store and thought that this too was how it was when you had enough of the stuff, besides getting what you

wanted you could even get rid of what you didn't want. He turned toward Shirley and found her staring into her empty glass.

"You want another shot?" he asked.

She shook her head without looking up. He brought the bottle out, poured another splash into his glass, put the bottle into his jacket pocket, and drank again. Shirley didn't say anything.

"How about going to a movie?" he suggested.

"Okay, I guess," she said, still staring into her glass, maybe like reading her fortune, he thought.

"First let me buy you some of that perfume I saw you look at coming in."

Now she raised her eyes to him.

"You're a big spender, it seems like," she said, sounding a little cautious or something.

"When I find somebody I like to spend it on, yeh," he told her. "C'mon, let's go."

He reached for her hand and she let him find it easy. He pulled her out of the booth after him, picked up the check, and led her with him to the cashier. He put down another of the five-dollar bills, swept up his change and slipped it into his pocket, and walked over to the perfume counter, letting her follow him this time. She came up and now she took hold of his arm. They studied the display.

"See what you want?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Um-hum. If you want to buy me some."

"Didn't I say I did?" he demanded, trying to make his voice commanding.

She looked up at the woman clerk who had come over behind the counter.

"That Rose-Marie," Shirley said, pointing to a lower shelf. "That in the little box."

The woman brought it out and held it for her to see. Shirley nodded with a small smile.

"That's one-ninety-eight," the woman told her.

"You got it in a bigger size?" he asked.

"Oh, sure," the woman said, and put back the little box and brought out a much larger one. "This is four-fifty."

"Wrap it up," he ordered, and handed over one more of the five-dollar bills, and saw Shirley's big eyes grow a little wider.

While they waited, she didn't say anything but stood with her hands linked around his arm, and when he moved right next to her, she didn't pull off from him, she leaned on his arm a little harder till the clerk came with the neatly wrapped box and he took it and handed it to her.

"Gee, that's swell of you. Thanks, Gregory," she whispered, and he could almost feel he was Gregory, as if this money had bought him the new name too, all so easy, the way it was going to get him everything else he wanted.

He took her to another counter to pick out the candy bars she liked. He bought six packs of clove gum, and they stopped outside the drug store to have two sticks apiece, to cover up any whiskey on their breath.

"Now where's a movie you'd like to go to?" he asked, and smashed the spicy gum between his teeth and felt the liquor through his legs and in his ears while he watched her turn and look one way and then the other along the lit-up street, and to him it didn't matter what movie if the place was dark enough, with her in one of those double seats.

"My head's going around, sort of," she said, and giggled a little. "I feel like I'm floating."

He slipped his arm through hers and linked their fingers.

"Come on, you'll be all right," he said. "Let's get to that movie. All this bright light is bad for our eyes."

"Well—" she said slowly, squeezing his arm and pressing their linked fingers, and turned a little, so he knew that was the way and it was all going to be all right.

Strolling down the street was like drifting on a cloud, having this girl close by, clinging to him now, and whiskey and candy in his pockets, and all that money to get whatever else he wanted, with what he now wanted most seeming in easy reach, maybe before this night was over.

"After the movie," he said, "I'll take you home in a taxi."

She looked up at him with those wide-open eyes and that slight smile that seemed to promise so much.

"That'll be real nice," she said, and he thought she squeezed his hand a little closer.

She began humming now, something he didn't know, but it sounded popular, and as they walked he bent his head almost against hers to listen and didn't say anything. Then there before them was the flashing marquee of the movie house. They unlinked hands and arms; he stepped forward to buy the tickets. In the glass cage a man was standing behind the red-headed cashier, watching—the manager, maybe, checking up on how she was doing or what the take was so far, sort of snoopy, the guy looked, but the cashier didn't seem to be paying him any attention.

It was another of the five-dollar bills that he slid in to the red-head. He held up two fingers and then let his hand rest by the slot, ready for the tickets. But the man in the booth reached over the red-head's shoulder and picked up the bill, and the red-head wasn't paying any attention to that, she was looking out at something behind him, and it was two men come up from somewhere, guys he hadn't noticed on the street, one of them in regular clothes but the other a cop. This cop took hold of his arm as though he meant it, too.

"Come on," he said, and pulled him over toward a parked car before he could look to see which way that Shirley had beat it, and he hadn't asked her where she lived and didn't even know her last name so how would he ever find her again if he ever got out of this—yeh, if he ever did, whatever it was.

The guy in plain clothes opened the back door of the car; the cop shoved him in. He had to get rid of the pint; he jerked out the bottle and pushed it down into the crack at the back of the seat and loaded up with more clove gum just before the cop coming around behind the car got in next to him. Another cop showed up from somewhere and piled in behind the wheel. The plain clothes detective got in with him, the last door clicked, the starter hummed. Off they went with a smooth powerful rush that seemed to add to the dizziness in his mind, the questions blurring into each other as they slid along through the traffic with nobody saying anything. So his having all that money was maybe the trouble, was it? Well, he wasn't guilty, he hadn't stolen it, that guy gave it to him, he'd swear to that.

"Come on, get out," the cop from in front was saying; he was holding the door open and they were at the station.

They went in, one right by him and the other two behind. They marched him into a room where another cop in uniform was behind a desk, with a ledger open.

"Name?" the desk cop said, looking up, with his pen ready.

"Erwin," he answered, thinking not Gregory, just plain Erwin.

"Erwin what?" the cop said sharply, with his head down now, looking at the page, waiting to write it all at once.

"Erwin Smith."

"Address?"

There it was. That did it. Now his folks would have something to yack about for sure, and he'd never hear the end of this. Even if he could get out of it here, he might as well never go home again. But he had to give his right address, because they could check up. So he told it and saw it being written out in the ledger, coming black onto the page under the penpoint, and how crazy it all looked upside down, like something that didn't have anything to do with him, but everything was upside-down now.

The desk cop put his name on a card too and fired more questions at him—his age and where was he in vocational school and had he ever been brought in before. Then they searched him, and there was all that money in the envelope. Here in the glaring light it looked like even more than under that street-lamp, and he hated to see it in their hands and think what he could have done if he'd been able to hang onto it. They had it, though, and the detective was looking it over a bill at a time, not like he was counting, but maybe for the serial numbers or some markings, like in the movies after a robbery.

"This must be it," he said at last. "Yeh, this is it."

So they took him into a smaller room and the detective started in on him, with another guy there taking down every word he said. They made him go over it and over it, and they took it down every time, how this guy bumped into him, accidentally, trying to go around him the wrong way, a fellow he'd never seen before, not that he could remember.

Then another man came in, not in uniform, but the others sort of made way for him and called him captain, and this captain gave

him just one long look and sat down, as if who this kid was didn't matter as long as they got what they were after. The detective fellow went on asking and asking those questions, about how come a guy he claimed he didn't even know just up and handed over all that money and for what reason.

Then another fellow in plain clothes barged in.

"Well, captain," he said, "we got one of 'em."

Irma or Shirley, he wondered wildly. If it was Irma, that dope, she'd tell how he'd had the whiskey, too, and he'd be that much worse off. But they were talking about a man—nabbed him at the end of the street, with some of it on him, this other detective was saying, and he had spilled it, who the others were and where they'd been operating.

"Was there a kid in it?" the captain asked. "Like this one?"

This other detective didn't even give him a look, he just shook his head and told the captain the guy they'd picked up hadn't said anything about any kid, why?

"Some of the stuff was passed to this one," the captain told him, and did this detective look surprised while the captain went on about their bumping into each other the way he'd told it, and how the fellow had handed it over and run.

"Could be he saw some of us around," the detective said, "and decided to dump the stuff quick."

"Could be," the captain said and stopped, and the room was silent for a minute while they all waited, and then the detective who'd brought this news made a half-salute with one finger and went out.

The captain turned back to him.

"What do you think? What did you think when he gave it to you?"

Here it was again, they were sticking it right at him, the question he'd put off from the first, and put off so hard he'd almost forgot about it, so now what could he say?

"I don't know," he heard himself stammer. "I—I never thought much about it, I guess."

The captain looked him hard in the eye.

"A fellow hands you all that money and you don't wonder why?"

He gulped but went on with something he'd just thought of.

"I didn't know it was money he gave me. I didn't look till I got up to the next street light."

That didn't seem to satisfy the captain.

"So then you looked. So what did you think then? You didn't take it for granted all that money belonged to you, did you? Didn't you wonder whose it was and how you could get it back to them?"

He hadn't even thought of that and now he couldn't figure out quick how he could make the captain believe he had, so he fell back on what he was sure of.

"I thought it was mine. He gave it to me—I never asked him for it—he just handed it over, so I thought it was mine."

The captain frowned.

"But you claim you didn't stick him up and you didn't know him and he didn't know you. So why should he hand over all that money?"

There they were, back on the big question, and all he could grab onto now was what he'd heard them talking about.

"Maybe it was stolen money and this guy wanted to get rid of it before they picked him up."

"Oh," the captain said, "so you took stolen money, but you didn't think about getting it back to whoever it belonged to. You just thought it was yours now."

He gulped again and forced himself to nod, but he couldn't speak, remembering what he'd heard about receiving stolen goods, and now he was sure he knew why they were holding him and what he was in for.

"Come on," said the captain sternly. "What else did you think when you found what this fellow had handed you?"

It was like feeling around in darkness, to find some way past these questions, out of their hands, and not only that, but perhaps to get away with that money—anyhow, some of it, he ought to have something for bringing it in, sort of. So he'd have to tell them something more, that would suit them better.

"I thought," he said, and had to swallow before he could start again, "I thought it was—I thought it was money. I was broke. I'd been wondering where could I get a buck or so, and here was all those five-dollar bills. So all I thought was it was money."

Now the captain really surprised him; he leaned back and smiled and even chuckled a little. Then he looked over at the detective and the detective winked at him. And he didn't seem so stern. But maybe this was their way of working him up to a confession so then they could say he'd received stolen goods. He hated himself for his big mistake. There on the street corner, when he saw what he had, if he'd just beat it right for home, and hid the money and waited to spend it, instead of throwing it around all over, and on those damned girls. Maybe the way he spent it in the drug store was what put the cops onto him. Or maybe that drip Irma had got sore—a fine thing after he'd given her one of those fives. And now the cops had that whole wad, except for what change he had in his jeans, and he'd never get it back. And he could have kept it all and hid it and had it all to spend, a little at a time, if he hadn't been such a goddamn fool. He came to and saw the captain was watching him, taking his time before he went on.

"So you say you thought it was money. Well, I believe you. You must have thought so or you wouldn't have been passing it out so openly. But you're wrong. It wasn't money. It's counterfeit."

He went through the next hour in a daze. They took his fingerprints and had him answer more questions; they made him try to describe the guy who gave him the envelope and which way he ran when he saw the squad car coming with lights, and then he had to come clean about how he'd hid behind shrubbery himself as the car went by, which they made him admit didn't look so good, and after that he quit trying and told them everything they wanted to know, and they turned him inside out with their questions but they didn't find anything more against him, because he'd never been mixed up with the law before. And toward the last it seemed they were beginning to believe him that he hadn't known the guy who passed him the envelope and had no idea the bills were phony.

So then they took him and plunked him down in that front room again and left him there. The cop at the desk didn't seem to be noticing him but there was another one by the door and anyhow they had his name and address so what good would it do to run? He sat still and watched. Over on the other side of the room were three guys sitting talking, two young-looking and one gray-headed, who didn't look like cops or anybody being held either, and when one of

them said there were several angles to it they weren't being let in on yet, he guessed they could be reporters, maybe the ones who'd be putting his name and all in the papers, and he shrank down in his chair, but they didn't seem to have noticed him.

"The captain says it's complicated," the fat young-looking one was saying.

The older one kind of grinned and shifted and stretched his legs out in front of him, like he was prepared to wait it out.

"The captain is right," he said. "One of the most complicated questions in the world—what does constitute an honest buck?"

The other younger one, the skinny one, made a gesture with both arms.

"Here we go again, way out with Socrates," he said, and you could tell he was kidding.

"No, I mean it," the older guy said, quite serious. "Those fives, for instance—they say they're so good down to honest Abe's last chin-whisker it takes an expert to tell, and the real regular ones are only paper too, with the same set of curlicues, so what's the difference except the idea?"

"Look," said the skinny one, "you mean as long as it's current it's currency? And it ain't necessarily purity that makes it float?"

The way those three were talking made no sense to him, but he kept listening, expecting, though he didn't know what.

"You mean like Gresham's law?" the fat young guy was asking the older one. "Bad money driving out good?"

The gray-headed fellow looked kind of amused.

"It's more than that," he said. "It's always the idea. The bad money moves on the idea that it's good. Like everything else. For as long as it takes to find out the idea itself is wrong."

"Huh!" the skinny one said. "Well, the law, and I don't mean Gresham's, seems pretty sure somebody had a wrong idea about it this time."

These reporters still hadn't looked his way even once, so maybe he wasn't what they meant. Maybe they didn't even know he was mixed up with this money business. Anyhow, they didn't seem to be talking about him. Not the older guy, anyhow, going on again in that peculiar dreamy way, like he didn't give a damn but still he meant every word of it.

"The thing to worry about," he was saying, "isn't just the simple single malefactor, but the idea behind it. The trouble is, it gets harder all the time to tell the real from the false. So when you can't tell any more, will that make the phony stuff good, or will the idea have been lost for sure?"

The thin young man shrugged; the fat one stared in a puzzled way.

"Well, anyhow," he said, "you sure lost me just then."

It was like a show, and watching and listening so hard, he'd half forgot where he was and why, even if it was the money they were talking about. And the part he'd understood, that was right, that money did look like the real thing. This much was for sure too, while he'd been passing the stuff it was okay, for him anyhow.

Now a cop came along and took him back to the captain's office and left him there, to stand in front of the desk, with the captain leaning back in his chair and looking at him hard.

"You're going to be on probation now," he said, in a cold voice. "Maybe you didn't know it was counterfeit, but if you thought it was real you should have been trying to turn it in for the rightful owner. Instead of hiding behind bushes with it. You're lucky it was counterfeit. I'm not going to book you for receiving it the way you did. We've got the ones we wanted for this. But now you better watch your step. I'm warning you, after this business, if you're ever brought in again, we'll throw the book at you. Now beat it."

He didn't wait to hear that twice. He hurried out into the dark. It took him a minute to realize which way was which. It would be a long walk, and he was late already, but he didn't give a damn about that now. Seeing he'd had this run-in, the cops would be sure to come around and tell his family about it. There'd be no end to the yacking now, but he didn't care about that either. All he could think of was how he'd been going good there for a while, with all that dough. And that captain tried to tell him he should have turned it in right away to them, huh? Yeh, and let those cops latch onto it—besides all the other rackets they had. They didn't need it the way he did, and where would he get hold of that much again, in any kind of money? A real wad, and all fives, it had looked like, there under the street light. Hundreds, it must have been—maybe thousands. If he could have hung onto it, he wouldn't have had any

trouble passing it, a little at a time. He might even have got some kind of used car, and with a car the girls would be easy. There'd be plenty more like Shirley—better even than Shirley.

Walking on, he stuffed his cold hands into the pockets of his jeans and felt the change he'd got, the few crumpled dollar bills and the little lump of loose coins. It was a lot more than he'd wished for earlier in the evening, but it wasn't enough, now. It was real, though, this money. But hell, it had all been real, the whole business, while it lasted. Everybody took that dough and gave him what he asked for, and that made it good enough for him. The whiskey bottle in his hand and his hand up against her leg—that was no dream. All he cared about now was to get hold of another wad, enough to give him back the feeling that he could do what he damn well pleased and have whatever he wanted. All a guy needed was the money.

To Richard Wright

By CONRAD KENT RIVERS

Like Shapiro's new Negro,
you put away the monkey suit and red, red, shirt.
After seeing white hoods and black bodies on elm trees,
you hurriedly wrote a book, caught a boat that sails,
and sleep soundly.

A boat leaves for France every evening,
but Sartre wants to come here. I hope that you bask on the Riviera,
and teach your children the non-sensitivity of Caviar.

And we need you here,
young Jesus of the black noun and verb,
your voice could assist the "sit-ins" as they say:
We are no longer victims of your hate and our color.

I did not read your latest book,
since Dylan's death, now Camus, poetry or prose is not the same.
The white man has not really changed.
And the NAACP is still the black child's prayer.

Toure came over the other day,
he ate in D.C. and every thing there has changed.
I heard that J.B. is back, let us hope that his
objectivity is still the same.

A graduate of Wilberforce University, CONRAD KENT RIVERS is currently living and writing in Harlem. His work has appeared in several periodicals and in a first volume, *Perchance to Dream, Othello.*

Our liberals are still too un-liberal,
and I've forgotten what Faulkner's trying to prove.
Many Negroes still segregate themselves,
and believe that protest is a falling (northern) star.

Booker T. Lincoln Roosevelt Jones,
is raising a lot of hell with a ballot.
Catfish Row is unionized for mutual liberty.
Poor Porgy is becoming a face without a place.
But Hollywood is still Hollywood, step-in-slow.

Booker T. is realizing that Jesus didn't vote on the
Taft-Hartley, or elect that president, or laugh that weak
Civil Rights Bill off the floor. Our task is simple.
Your native land is still full of betterment and hypocrisy.
The national goal is a crying shame . . . incidently,
you should come back and reappraise . . . but in case you don't;
please find room for me over there. Amen.

Wendy Is a Name

By RALPH L. KINSEY

Wendy begins in a once upon
time without question, a once way
back beyond thinking, and teller gone:
neither the hour nor she would stay.

Hastened onward she is like June
thunder, and her going was proud;
ah, that she should be so soon
dangle-legged on a white cloud.

Now, thinking under the red flower
of April, in this room of world,
I wonder why her fragile dower
of life was thus bleakly furled.

Wendy came like going of winter;
spring and even summer filled
the air of her fair form: splinter
of death in some way got her killed.

No one could establish where
the sun set, or the moon poured down
the precipice of uncounted stair
(*I* was wandering a far town):

suffice it that she went away,
and left a small cavern of lack;
night fell, and died where it lay,
and the *me* of me never came back.

An attorney at law in Navarre, Ohio, RALPH L. KINSEY has published poems in a variety of magazines, and a collection, *The Pageless Air*, was published in 1959 as a selection of The Book Club for Poetry.

The Arts Today

By BERTRAM MORRIS

■ Whatever else they are, the arts are surely the intensification and vivification of human experience. The drive to create—to make, to write, to paint, to compose—is deep-seated in man's need to understand himself. Experience is probably the least well understood of his qualities. A person takes it for granted that he can see or love or hear or feel or hate. But what he in his naive way thinks he experiences is precisely what the artist in his sophisticated way agonizes to bring about. On his own level, the artist realizes that experience is understood—indeed, is created—only as he is capable of creating an object which gives it expression. This object is the work of art, which, in turn, is the very embodiment of experience. To experience a bison is in a profound sense to be able to paint it; to suffer the death of a salesman is to be able to dramatize it; to know the wasteland is to be able to delineate it. The artist expresses these things by giving shape to what is otherwise shapeless.

Because they embody intense and vivid human experience, the arts reach back into the life of man. They help him to come to terms with his world and so to transform the alien into realities made congenial to him. By reason of this transformation, art is consummatory and not just a decoration of life. Its stuff is the vitalities of man's existence, and its consummation is the molding process by which these vitalities are rendered into something intelligible. By

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art, things ill understood are converted into things better understood. A Cezanne, a Picasso, an O'Neill, a D. H. Lawrence, a Bartok help us understand rocks and men, war and the dream-world, alienation and love, symmetries and discordances and lyrical harmonies in ways which we could not understand them had these artists not lived and worked. Artists such as these reveal to us something new about nature and ourselves, and by their revelations they at the same time emerge as critics of us and of our world.

We should be clear about what we mean by experience. It is not just an emotional upheaval, even though in the absence of emotion there seems to be no authentic experience. It is not an inner suffocation, which in truth can only blind a person to what there is to be realized in the world. It is not the attainment of a privacy which prohibits the sharing of insights. On the contrary, experience is the reciprocal relation in which things become determinate by being given form, and emotions become definite by becoming expressed. This is to say that both things and emotions come to have natures just because they are made intelligible in the work of art. And by the work of art things and persons are brought into a new union. The essential function of art resides in this union. Its function is to overcome the alienation of man from the world, or to say it in positive terms, to make man at home in the world.

Little wonder is it that much of the first magnificent writing should have been the epic and the tragic. The epic contains themes of human exploits. It thrives on the actions of men who in achieving human feats express qualities of minds and actions which vicariously provide others with a sense of human realization. An Odysseus embodies talents and achieves successes that virile persons emulate. Through the epic, as well as through their religion, the Greeks made their world significantly human. In tragedy, moreover, they came to understand depths of human existence which the epic could not quite penetrate. By constantly reinterpreting their myths transformed into tragedies, they came to understand perplexities of human destiny itself. Aeschylus and Sophocles and Euripides each in his own way explored new aspects of human destiny and provided his contemporaries with new and more profound outlooks upon human life. Whether it was the human predicament caused by the gift of fire and the practical arts, the conflict between religion and

the state, or the ethics of human relations, Greek tragedy came to terms with human paradoxes—and in a way which never confused amusement with the realities of life. The Greek sensitivity is suggestive of the high function of art at all times.

Art and culture are inextricably intertwined. I have suggested that the artist is not only creator, but also critic. He is artist because of his sensitivities. His life as artist is bound up with frustrations and his intense struggle to free the sensibilities from the burdens of a world insensible to human urgencies. Art—that is, serious art—is born of conflict and it insists upon liberating the human spirit. Ordinarily, it speaks in the first person singular, but its intent is to give tongue to those that are tied in order that one's inchoate feelings may come to fulfilment. By giving these feelings a local habitation and a name, the artist expresses them and at the same time creates a collective consciousness. He achieves this latter by helping to formulate and to give precision to the culture of his people. Accordingly, we may say that when we understand art, we begin to understand the culture of which it is a part.

Culture includes a good deal more than art and the refinements of life. Some would say that it consists in the sum-total of a peoples' actions, including the varieties of their institutions and the artifacts which make them endure. A more adequate conception of culture would seem to include what Sapir and others have called the "genius" of a people. This term calls attention to those unique qualities which run throughout the life of a people and which provide a focus for their actions, sentiments, and ideas. By virtue of its having some kind of unity ("pattern" is the current term), a culture has an authenticity, which is something more than the mere summation of all that a people do and make. A culture exists only as it possesses some inner consistency, some inner harmony, which expresses itself in the sense of poise and power which persons have in their undertakings. Broad enough to make room for a range of lives consonant with the varieties of human temperaments, an authentic culture nevertheless also supplies a direction which makes significant the expression of temperament. As Sapir would have it, the genuine culture is harmonious, balanced, self-satisfactory, and free from negative struggle and waste. Surely we need to add that it must contain that kind of agreement on fundamentals which comes about

through a play of critical intelligence. Otherwise, the harmony is of puppets, not of persons.

Although the ideal of a genuine culture must far transcend anything achieved in practice, yet without a conception of it we can't quite understand the function of art. The artist is one who is singularly sensitive to the shortcomings of life; he must unerringly recognize the existence of the spurious which is taken for the genuine. In this lies his priceless talents as critic. Recognizing the tawdry values and sensitive to the requirements of the genuine, his work is indispensable to the shaping of a more genuine culture. How he does this depends not just on his intrinsic abilities but also on the actual state of the arts. In this way his criticisms are more than self expressions. They are also relevant to the existing conditions of social life. This is why art that is not fresh is worthless.

When we apply this standard to the arts of our day, we begin to see that the conditions of modern life allow to the practical arts and the mass arts an aesthetic importance at least equal to that of the fine arts. In fact, the pitfall of effete expressions, although ever present, is more easily detectable in these arts than in the fine arts.

The applied arts, especially, enjoy a decisive advantage over the fine arts. Their advantage is contained in the urgencies which encourage designers to take into account the realities of human existence. Even when the applied arts to which we are wedded are largely obsolete, there are insistent pressures for change—namely, the useless human suffering they cause. The urgencies implicit in the practical arts are a simple matter of economy—the use of limited resources, human and natural, in order to maximize well-being. The only luxury that man can afford—indeed, the only luxury that actually enhances life—is the expenditure of energies in having a care for things in a way which satisfies the whole man, and not of energies expended upon things designed to display conspicuous waste.

The pressures for this sort of economizing come primarily from man's relation to nature and secondarily from his relation to other men. For this reason, the applied arts are inherently grounded in secular knowledge, whatever extra-secular sanctions may be superimposed upon them. Natural knowledge cannot consistently be

defied without a toll on human welfare, however short this knowledge may be from satisfying deep-lying aspirations of men. Clearly, it is by reason of these aspirations that the applied arts can serve an aesthetic function as well as a practical one. The need for completeness drives man to seek beyond the practical to the aesthetic. Basically, he becomes aware of this further dimension by virtue of the fulfilments inherent in perceptual experience. Perception is a delight, is a unity, is a fulfilment. Accordingly, things can be shaped to add this quality to what would otherwise be unpleasant, unharmonious, and not satisfying. The principle holds true in the least as well as in the most sophisticated of artifacts—from arrow heads to rockets.

Modern architecture reveals the principle in impressive and exciting ways. Frank Lloyd Wright insisted upon a new architecture primarily by his recognition of the human demand for a continuity between the inside and the outside of a house. The Aristotelian definition of a house as a shelter offering protection against wind, rain, and sun signifies enclosure, but so inadequately that the "essence" of a house gets manifested in a boxlike structure, inhuman, degrading, and stifling. Wright brings sun and water, even wind and trees, into a house, erasing the sharp separations between man and nature. His "essences" differ each from every other depending upon whether they become embodied in lake-shore, hill-side, or prairie-land structures—and even more, depending upon the unique contours of the land and seascapes. Wright's impetus was a romantic one—as far removed from the row-houses and square-blocks as possible. He looked once more for the individual and tried to remove him from the ambience of mass conformity to that of an eccentric independence.

Others, more willing to yield to the pressures of mass society, have rejected Broad Acres in favor of an urban architecture consistent with the needs of dense populations, rigid materials capable of indefinite repetition, and cubicled space more given to vertical than to horizontal expansion. Mies van der Rohe, for example, is more concerned with catering to the exigencies of a society devoted to financial and business transaction than to the impulses to cultivate rose gardens. Nature becomes transformed into concrete, glass, and aluminum. Sunlight is converted into slant rays adjusted by slats or rays softened by passing them through a wall of drapes. The neo-

technics which are applied to metropolitan architecture practically defy nature, including even gravity itself. Little wonder is it then that the conflict becomes transformed into one between urban and suburban life, with all the embarrassments it causes man in trying to bridge the two.

When we shift attention from architecture to that of machine-design, we are likely to find that modern technology provides much more happy solutions. The problems are, to be sure, less complicated inasmuch as the functions are simpler and the challenge to the human imagination less exacting. Machines, even those capable of multiple operations, are designed with a simplicity of purpose that permits further elegance dictated only by the cravings of sight and touch. Elongations, rounded corners, polished surfaces—these may be enough to prove the care of the designer for human sensibilities. Modern methods of processing and packaging have an eye to color and shape, which often reflect both the biological virtues and beauty of natural products. The simplest, transparent packaging can employ natural light to cater to the kaleidoscopic joy that sophisticated man can still take in simple things. Thus the modern designer can create objects of beauty by capturing an integrity of movement from the mechanical to the biological to the social, enhancing the process at each step, even as the poet does in moving from verse to verse in a culminating creation.

The mortal sin against applied art consists in rupturing the art-process. When an insistent element is introduced which is false to the continuities, ugliness appears, not beauty. Whether it is rose medallions on machines that call for simplicity of line, or medallions of an extra wheel imprinted on the reverse side of an automobile trunk, the falsity trumpets the insincerity of the designer. These sports, whether appearing as pseudo-biological or pseudo-social motifs, are monstrosities and deserve to be treated as such. We have pretty well learned today that we should not mar physical beauties by plastering on them biological design. We are a long way from having learned to distinguish social continuities from disruptive elements—especially in regard to those things designed for retail consumption. Designing for flashy competitive obsolescence, we often exaggerate surface features out of all proportion to functional continuities. As in dress design, we are asked to substitute fad for beauty.

The perversion is obvious when style, which in the arts is the essence of integrity, becomes converted into fashion, always distinguishing but seldom distinguished.

Although the need for social continuities is detectable in the applied arts, it is positively insistent in the mass arts. Allied as the mass arts are with the technical processes of photography and sound-recording, they live in an appeal to a mass audience. The techniques required for the production of a radio program, not to speak of TV, rest on a phenomenally complicated knowledge, however many there are who possess it. There can be no doubt of the propriety of applying the phrase, "the institutions of expression," to the mass arts. The organization of technical skills, the bringing together of creative talent, the means of assembling a mass audience—these are but a bare indication of the scope required to make the mass arts into a reality. But even more to the point, the convergence of the institutions of power and the institutions of expression is crucial to the maintenance of each. The issues arising out of this convergence turn upon some of the most complicated and controversial questions of the day. Among these is one which is most relevant to our discussion: can the mass media serve in the creation of an authentic culture, as well as provide the kind of expression which is essential to it?

The question admits of no easy answer, and I do not propose to supply one. Instead, I wish merely to designate some of the major conditions necessary to anything like the emergence of mass arts which can excite and engage the creative instincts. The indications are that we have a plethora of distinguished creative writers for the mass arts. It even seems likely that those writers are willing to make necessary concessions to the co-operative requirements of these arts, as have playwrights from time immemorial and, more recently, movie script writers. Inherently, the medium is one which calls for a multitude of co-operating talents, some with technical skills, some with productive sensibilities as well. Mechanical features, including time allotment, must be respected if there is to be anything at all like an adequate production. One may, however, regard these as the requirements of the medium which, although different from the fine and the applied arts, are nevertheless comparable. The crucial difference between this art and the fine arts (less so, but still ap-

preciable in regard to the applied arts) is the kind of patronage it involves. This patronage is so thoroughly organized that it can bring more than economic sanctions to bear upon artists: it can often control public sentiment itself and therefore the censure which the whole population may visit upon its aberrant artists. This often strains the very conception of culture, and therefore of cultural focus. Inquisitorial, it can terrorize and beat into submission—sometimes through blandishment, sometimes through naked force—whole vast populations, without there being any effective reprisals possible against that power.

That power which has manifested itself today shows up in one of two ways, or a combination of both. Either it is the power of private organizations which substantially control public policy or of state organizations which through their directors impose policy on the masses. The curious combination of the two shows up as fascism, in which arbitrary power is in essence an extreme extension of private enterprise. In either case, propaganda is the technique which is used to distort the social process. And whatever other refinements may be employed depend upon the ingenuity of those in power to bring about the results they desire. I am not suggesting that propaganda is intrinsically false in art. It may or may not be. It is false when it disrupts the continuity of the art-process; it is not, so long as it effectively advances it.

Our question as to whether the mass arts can effectively and legitimately employ talent in the service of a genuine culture reduces to the question of whether there can be a shift from private to public or quasi-public sanctions that can evoke talent instead of destroying it. Private sanctions will not do in the mass arts for one and only one reason—they are irresponsible. Whether it is a cigarette sponsor who insists that a script writer must substitute the term "fortunate" for "lucky" in his writing, or whether it is a religious sect that insists that its particular brand of morality must prevail in the mass arts, or whether it is a patriotic organization that imposes black lists upon producers and therefore makes an orthodoxy of the kind of content which the mass arts may explore—all are sinners against the spirit of a genuine culture. Substituting privacy, prejudice, and orthodoxy for what should be public, critical, and tolerant, they reduce the mass arts to an adolescent level, which can at best amuse, but probably just distracts minds from advancing into the spontaneities which are

the birthright of creative genius. To suggest that these private organizations be silenced is, of course, no help. It merely converts one kind of tyranny into another. And although the immediate merits of the case may seem to warrant it, tyranny by being publicly sanctioned can lead only to even blacker sins.

The political question, it seems, is an intrinsic part of any intelligent treatment of the mass arts. It cannot be evaded. We are squarely confronted, then, with the issue of whether there can be a genuine culture in a mass society—whether the political virtues of intelligence, tolerance, sensitivity, power, and creative advance can all be combined in a community intent upon the fulfilment of its human vitalities. Those who take the dim view may pride themselves on their realistic appraisal of human beings *en masse,* concluding that the vast majority are incapable of exercising the necessary virtues, and that even if they did possess them, the mere mechanics of mass society makes it impossible for them effectively to put them to use. The formulation of policy, the making of decisions, and their effective implementation in social action must be engineered by the few and can never be undertaken by the masses. However strong the case may be, it is certainly not one without inherent weaknesses. Whether expressed in the more romantic form, such as Nietzsche proposed, or in the more brutal form of the garrison state, it cannot possibly satisfy the demands of a genuine culture. Surely its very essence prohibits a culture in which the vast majority can be full participants, stimulated to the utmost to use their talents, to enjoy the rewards of both the institutions of power and the institutions of expression, and to achieve a life of the community in which common ends prevail by agreement, not by ignorance, fiat, or terror. The alternatives appear to be an industrial system in which the mass arts contribute to the establishment of a genuine mass culture or else one in which greed and brutality serve to stupify the masses through distractions and inanities to prevent them from rising much above the level of simplemindedness. The alternatives exist partly in the mass arts themselves, but mostly in the political mentality which has the power of strangulating or of liberating them.

Our primary object in this discussion has been to point up the vitalities potential in the arts. The fine arts need not be without their peculiar vitalities any more than the practical arts need be without

theirs. At their best, the makers of the fine arts exhibit qualities which compel attention: an imaginative sweep, a profundity, an attunement to life, together with a sensitivity to the points at which stale monotonies crush the human spirit. Despite its potencies, we nevertheless find in the practical and the mass arts a directness and immediacy both in the things of use and in the technical equipment provided by the sciences, which effectively do for vast numbers what the fine arts can do only for the few.

Art is, after all, a making. The argument from the uselessness of the things made is no very good reason to suppose the aesthetic superiority of them. The making of things of use and of things for mass consumption certainly contains traps that must be avoided. Utility is easily confused with vendibility and production for the masses is too easily disfigured by the makers' capitalizing on or capitulating to the popular emotional prejudices. But the very closeness of these arts to the tempo of life and the stir of the emotions affords them an opportunity not open to the fine arts: they have a direct connection with the rest of culture.

We hear much today about the two cultures: the arts or humanities and the sciences. Traditionally, the arts have been recognized as capturing unique qualities and as being apprehended in contemplative moments. The sciences, on the contrary, have been more closely associated with practice, allied as it is with prediction and control and consequently with technological advancement. These views, I submit, contain two half-truths that don't add up to a whole. The crying need is to be able to save both art and science—the one from romantic sentimentalism, the other from callous practicality. To do this, we must seek to find universalities in art and particularities in science. As long as the tensions between the two last, so long will we, as Aeschylus long ago dramatized in *Prometheus Bound*, tragically agonize in the split within our culture.

The two cutting edges of modern culture are the institutions of power and the institutions of expression. The practical and the mass arts provide a natural transition which can make more human the political forces and more vital the expressive impulses. Whether or not modern Promethean man can effect this transition will decide whether he will remain bound or become unbound.

Five O'Clock Shadow

By ROBERT L. TYLER

Swarming from fissures in stone
buzzing near bricks
down a dark swoop
of asphalt through a concrete gorge
they come
beside the tedious relay of the street lights
coming on like roman candles belching softly
yellow balls of heart burn.

Swirls of bobbing heads
clot like weeds and sticks on the current
and bubble turbulently at traffic signs
where angry women moil on levees
snubbed by busses.

Look how the clever sun
the dying sun
seeks the fleeting symbol
and shoots the cold canyon
to spot their goddess
stiff in her window grotto
smiling with her plaster lips
over flippant arms
on all her swarming
votaries.

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Father, Forever

By MYRON LEVOY

Father, forever
In dark my mind
Cannot, though it runs
Where tall trees are,
Though long it listens
Where tall birds cry,
Cannot find, though it follows
The trees in flight.

Father, forever
In dark my hand
Cannot, though it feels
My child's face,
Though it reaches out
For the snow's light,
Cannot find, though it holds
The child so white.

Father forever
In dark I stand,
In dark the trees
The birds in dark
In dark my mind
My hands in dark,
Father, forever
In dark my child.

MYRON LEVOY has published scientific articles in such journals as *Nucleonics, Scientific American,* and *Enciclopedia della Civiltà Atomica,* poetry in *Blue Guitar,* and a play will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Mutiny.*

On Decoding Humor

By JUDSON JEROME

■ That jokes are not always funny is only one indication of the difficulty of defining literary values or ascertaining "correct" literary interpretations. I would like here to discuss some specific instances of complex tone, particularly some in which the complexity arises from the coloring of serious passages by humor. I think awareness of or communication of tone is the central problem in reading or writing literature and that failure to recognize humor is perhaps the commonest error in mistaking tone—whether it appears in a reader's failure to understand or a writer's failure to control. Through analysis of some specific passages, I would like to raise the question of whether the presence of tonal characteristics can be verified, whether the phenomena I am discussing can be defined in terms that permit objective determination. To do so, I will have to use the old terms—to assert what *I* see and describe it in the language I know. But I hope, in addressing myself to a professional but not primarily literary audience, to inspire some skepticism and some thought that will help me know whether in my chief work I am dealing with illusions.

As a teacher or writer or critic of literature, one is always camped on a cliff—never sure there is ground under the floor. We have our dogmas and certainties: but every man is his own protestant sect; there is no orthodoxy. The best minds are in disagreement on the most fundamental questions. This would suggest one of three pos-

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sibilities: (1) that literary values are transcendent, beyond intelligibility; or (2) that we don't know how to define properly; or (3) that there is nothing there to define. While the second of these appeals to my faith and my reason, the first and third seem at times so dreadfully possible I cannot dismiss them with confidence.

More vividly to reveal our confusion, I have chosen examples of which my own interpretation is at odds with whatever authority exists in literary matters. If what I assert seems to be nonsense, so much the better—for that will be a challenge to demonstrate objectively *why* it must be nonsense, and we shall have made some progress. I suggest you be as hard-headed and unliterary as possible: think of these examples as messages sent by their writers into the air, valueless impulses until they are received, meaningless signals until they are decoded, untrustworthy communication until the decoding is verified. How do we know we have received what was sent, nothing less, nothing more?

By *tone* I mean implicit emotional coloring, such as is rendered in spoken communication by intonation. I discover a flat tire and say, "Oh, splendid!" A hearer has not received the message unless he incorporates an understanding of my tone of voice, my exasperated sarcasm in his interpretation of my speech. He should have some perception of what it means for me so to address an ironic comment to the universe at large, of this strategy for reconciling myself to a dirty trick of chance by showing superiority to it in a willingness to joke, however bitterly. The message is all this: not the words or even the words in context alone, but comprehension of total meaning—even though I might not understand that meaning myself, or might not have thought it out.

Tone of voice is difficult enough to interpret. You may say, "I love you," in such a way as to convey hate, anger, tenderness, lust, thousands of subtle variations and mixtures of emotions which are not simple to begin with. Your intonation can convey exactly the coloring you wish instantaneously and accurately—provided your audience is willing and able to receive your meaning. In writing, the problem is incomparably more complex. I think the only way we understand tone in writing at all is by imitating the spoken language imaginatively, by approximating silently in our throats the voice-stance we feel is appropriate—and to do this our feelings must

be unbelievably sensitive to context, to the author, to his age, to the finest distinctions of language. (I wonder whether the old-fashioned habit of reading with the lips might not contribute to a more sensitive comprehension of tone; at any rate, I strongly favor reading most literary work, particularly drama and poetry, very slowly—hardly more quickly than one reads aloud—as the mind is unable to accomodate itself to complex and shifting tones without waiting for an almost muscular response imitating the appropriate intonation.)

By *humor* I mean whatever appeals to our disposition to smile. We may *not* smile when so disposed—for other appeals may at any moment be stronger. And our smiles, if they occur, may reflect no happiness or pleasure. (In fact, the opposite is more likely: humor tends to be critical—and in moments of greatest serenity or most intense pleasure, smiling is less probable than tears.) When we are sharply aware of a disproportion, an absurdity, a critical inadequacy, an unexpected accuracy, a surprising coincidence, a nerve twitches somewhere and tugs at our lip-corners. A man sputtering with rage does not mean to be funny—but an author who presents him to us may mean humor as an element in the message. A woman screaming with grief for what turns out to be the wrong corpse may experience no amusement, but an author imagining or writing about such circumstances may hope to convey to a reader some recognition of universal incongruity, to evoke the twitch of a smile among other emotional responses demanded by the grotesque antics of our cosmos.

But the author's intention, even if it were perfectly recoverable, would not be a sufficient criterion of meaning. Messages often mean more than their senders know—or less. It is the meaning of the *message,* of what is actually *there,* we want to discover; and this implies a rather mysterious concept, that these subtle phenomena—tone, humor, as I have described them—exist *in* the message, that their presence can be verified or disproved. I ask you to wonder with me whether, one day, it will be possible to judge what I say in the following pages as either right or wrong.

I once read Swift's *A Modest Proposal* to a university freshman class. This is the essay in which Swift proposes that the Irish solve their economic difficulties by eating their most overproduced commodity: their babies. In the ensuing twenty-minute discussion, some students doubted that the plan would work for Ireland, some were

mildly outraged but felt that allowances had to be made for the level of eighteenth century civilization. Finally, one quiet fellow raised his hand and asked cautiously, "Is he *kidding*?" This is the primordial spark of literary sensitivity. I can imagine a multiple choice test giving clear alternatives: "Swift was (1) serious; (2) kidding; (3) confused; (4) a thirteenth century translator of the Bible; and (5) none of the above." I would feel fairly confident that there was a right answer and that some literary talent was required in order to arrive at it. But the brighter students would ask, rightly, "What do you mean, kidding?" and "How do we *know* what he intended?" and "Mightn't he have been serious and kidding at the same time?" Even if one can correctly label the essay as satire, has he really felt the compassion which enables Swift to write in such cold blood, the despairing, almost tearful vision of the horror of poverty which prompted Swift to perpetrate the very amusing horror of recipes for roasting and boiling babies, evoking the ravaging laughter (except from freshmen) which lies beyond sympathetic tears?

Even with these complexities, the case is too simple. As Shakespeare is the master of everything else, he is master of tone, of voice-stance, controlling every last reverberation and overtone of feeling with astonishing sureness. His greatest lines are frequently those which appear to be the simplest, and their greatness lies in the way they define a human situation, often torn by the most complex circumstances and feelings, exactly and clearly. In Hamlet's closet scene with Gertrude, for example, we have a crescendo of infinitely strained emotions. Having shortly before been convinced by the play-within-the-play of Claudius' guilt, having just decided against killing Claudius at prayer, having, in his mother's bedroom, stabbed Polonius behind the arras, thinking he was the king, Hamlet, so inordinately agitated, has the delicate duty of making his mother understand her own crime in marrying a villain. Polonius, the wrong man, is disregarded as a swatted fly, and the scene sweeps ahead in the urgency of its central problem. With the portraits he evokes the images of his father murdered and the present king, speaking daggers to the queen until she can endure no more. But suddenly the ghost of the elder Hamlet appears to Hamlet, although invisible to his mother. Hamlet breaks off his conversation with the

queen and seems to be talking in distraction to nothing at all. After reminding his son of his "almost blunted purpose," the ghost notices Gertrude, gaping at her son's apparent madness, and tells Hamlet to speak to her.

Now Hamlet is bewilderingly ready of tongue, acute in analysis, always on top of the action, knowing everyone and even himself too well. But what is he to say to Gertrude? He loves her and hates her too much, has been too disillusioned by her marriage, is too frightened (after all, a ghost is a ghost!) and awed by the spectre before him, too disturbed by the events of the past few minutes, the conversation of the past few seconds, to say anything at all. He says, ridiculously, rightly, "How is it with you, Lady?" It is one of Shakespeare's greatest, most courageous lines.

Its courage and greatness are in the way it skirts the comic. If anything were a shade wrong about the line, the audience, tense beyond endurance, might well break into laughter. But the ineffectuality, the comic helplessness and double-taking matter-of-factness, of the line deepens and defines the complex of unlikely, devastating events focusing in this scene. It is ludicrous as a nightmare is ludicrous—on reflection, by light of day. But as it is experienced, absurdity is horror: the terrible insanity of circumstance, of clashing emotions.

Consider some of the emotional factors I have not mentioned. Gertrude has just been brought to a violent confrontation of her own guilt—but now is experiencing relief mixed with sorrow as she escapes into the notion that Hamlet's accusations can be disregarded because of his obvious madness—that all her guilt is one of his morbid delusions. Hamlet has had a moment of ecstasy and certainty when Claudius showed his guilt at the play; but this has been followed by two serious frustrations: he could not kill Claudius praying, and when he thinks he *has* killed Claudius, it turns out to be meddling, tiresome Polonius, who seems always to be there botching things. Now he has risen to a new height of clarity and resolution as he has eloquently convinced the queen of her guilt—not for murdering Hamlet senior but for marrying such an unworthy man as Claudius. Just then the ghost reminds him that this is all beside the point—which is, after all, revenge. Correction of his mother is, like stabbing Polonius, a frustrating, distracting (no matter how

self-satisfying) waste of energy on a side issue. At this moment he is reminded that he must be polite, as it were—and, certainly, as the affairs of life go on heedless of our personal agony or grief, he *must* speak to her. The ridiculous situation and ridiculous line interrupt the action only as a genius can dare interrupt it—daring our laughter, showing us for an instant the whole tangle of the action and emotional forces by slicing it with trivia.

My contention is that to receive the message one must instantaneously see (or feel) all this—not in words but in, perhaps, a tremor. Can one test for that tremor—and analyze its relevant content? Or is what I have seen, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, perceptible only to me—to you no more than madness?

Similar cases occur often enough in Shakespeare to assure us he is aware of the dramatic effectiveness of inarticulateness. Othello, finally convinced by Iago, mutters incoherently and falls into a trance. Lear, in the height of his rage, sputters at his daughters with emotion beyond words:

> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall—I will do such things—
> What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth.

In the beautifully placid Sonnet 73 we have a suggestion of the same effect:

> That time of year thou mayst in me behold
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
> Upon these boughs

Yellowness suggests perhaps too pretty an autumn, a golden age. The speaker wants the pathos of age to be felt and so corrects himself grimly, "or none." But absolute barrenness is perhaps *too* grim, like imagining oneself as a skeleton. So he corrects himself again: "or few," and goes on—but (as though inadvertently) he has left us with a final suggestion of withered brown leaves clinging to the sapless bough—an image more horrible, more pathetic, than that of a bough cleanly bare. The hesitation, the awkward feeling for the word and giving it up, defines the tone.

In Sonnet 129, in which he rages against his own fleshly desires, he says that lust "Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,"

rising in intensity to the blasphemous "bloody" and then sinking to the relatively weak and general "full of blame." In case we doubt that this is what he meant, we might look at the very next line, "Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust," in which "Savage" and "cruel" are the strongest condemnations, but the line ends in the weakest phrase of both lines, "not to trust." Later in the sonnet he does it again. He says a lusting person is

> Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,
> Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme,

in which the word *extreme,* repeated from earlier in the poem, is like Lear's inarticulate curse. What it is, I know not, but it is the terror of the earth.

Complexity of tone is one of the great attractions of the popular metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. How are we to take it when Herbert, in deepest devotion, imagines God as a prostitute luring him to love, when Donne, in a prayerful poem, keeps returning to a serious but painfully corny pun on his own name—

> When thou has done, thou hast not done,
> For I have more.

Crashaw is one of the most shocking of seventeenth century poets in this respect. For example, his devotional poem, "On the Bleeding Wounds of our Crucified Lord," is a tortuously witty chain of hyperboles pertaining to flowing blood.

> Jesu, no more! It is full tide
> From thy hands and from thy feet,
> From thy head, and from thy side,
> All thy *Purple Rivers* meet.

He says Christ's feet swim in his own flood, the gift of his hand is its own blood, his side, like the Nile, is flooding and thereby fruitful, the weeping of his head makes the weeping of his eyes unnecessary.

> Water'd by the showres they bring,
> The thornes that thy blest browes encloses
> (a cruell and a costly spring)
> Conceive proud hopes of proving Roses.
>
> Not a haire but payes his River
> To this *Red Sea* of thy blood,
> Their little channels can deliver
> Something to the general flood.

And on and on. One may, of course, dodge the question by saying simply that it is a terrible poem. But I think it is not; in its own way it is beautiful and moving. And its own way is to employ humor as Shakespeare employed it in the closet scene, to intensify and sharpen tragic feeling. It is as though the poet were to say, "Laugh, if you dare—but this is the blood of God I am talking about—a transcendent paradox in itself. Would naturalism, would taste be sufficient to convey its magnitude?" The pathetic inadequacy of words, concepts, imagination, to deal with the tragedy of Christ's bleeding is deliberately part of the poem's effect.

Universally, modern readers smile or groan at Dryden's youthful gaucherie in his elegy on Lord Hastings, who died of smallpox. Dryden is imitating the metaphysicals (an influence he was soon to reject entirely) and goes all the way, speaking of the pustules:

> Each little Pimple had a Tear in it,
> To wail the fault its rising did commit:

Our groans mays reflect our insensitivity to tone. Perhaps Dryden also saw these lines as ridiculous. He might justify them by saying that ridiculousness is essentially part of the experience: the horrid ugliness of death, of disease, so ironically and heartbreakingly in contrast to our tender feelings about the person mourned. Put an edge of bitterness in your voice, as you do when you read Marvell's celebrated couplet:

> The Grave's a fine and private place,
> But none, I think, do there embrace,

and the lines take on a macabre dignity.

An even greater challenge to one's perceptiveness of tone is one of Dryden's richest, most mature lyrics, a poem with the unpromising title (and perhaps deliberate humor?) "To the Pious Memory of the Accomplisht Young Lady Mrs. Anne Killigrew. Excellent in the Two Sister-Arts of Poesie, and Painting: An Ode." A mediocre poetess, daughter of a friend of Dryden's, Anne Killigrew was not important in herself. Her early death is mourned in the most extravagent and fanciful of terms: her "Præexisting Soul" rolled "through all the Mighty Poets . . . Who Greek or Latine laurels wore, / and was that Sappho last, which once it was before." A swarm of bees left honey on the lips of Plato at his birth, but the heavenly spirits

didn't have time at Anne's birth to arrange such a miracle, although it would have been appropriate. They were too busy celebrating the holiday! She wrote love poetry, this child far too innocent to have loved. Dryden pokes the kindest sort of fun at her passion; her love poems remind him of the hot little god Cupid bathing in the cold stream of Diana's chastity. Unsatisfied with her complete control of poetry (writes the Poet Laureate), she sneaked into the neighboring province of painting and captured that, too. The dear one *did* try her hand at everything.

Unless we imagine that Dryden was simply too foolish to know what he was doing, we must try to discover the tone in which such remarks are appropriate. A kind of humor, again, modifies the quite sincere grief: the gentle tone of coddling and even gentle mockery, completely without contempt, which one uses in speaking of a lovely but perhaps overserious child, is something like what Dryden must have meant. Combine with this a certain pleasure and release in extravagance for its own sake, for the ingenious elaborations of fancy, for civility carried beyond reason, for pomp—a quality much in disrepute in our time and culture—for ceremony. The chief thing Dryden saw in Anne Killigrew's passing was the instant of innocence soon to be lost in a sophisticated, lubrique age. We who are wiser are more defiled. His own sophistication, which produces the poem, strains in appreciation of simple purity: a kind of amusement pervades and clarifies the poignancy of regret and grief. To appreciate his tone, we must be alert to his amusement, just as we must to the value he placed upon ingenuity, ceremony, learning, tenderness—in short, to the full range of interpenetrating and rapidly shifting voice postures needed to express complex feeling. Unless we hear *how* he says it, we do not know what he is saying.

Milton is frequently regarded as humorless—but the more I read him the more I think it is readers who are humorless, as well as presumptuous in thinking Milton did not know when he was funny. When we read of the war in heaven, of angels in armor tearing up the landscape by the roots,

> So hills amid the air encounter hills
> Hurled to and fro with jaculation dire,

we should smile, I think, but not in superiority. In what dream of

egotism do we imagine that Milton did not smile too, as he must have in discussing the sexual habits and digestive processes of angels, in depicting a smug bourgeois Adam and dissatisfied housewife Eve, in toying with the nudity of our parents—which, of course, meant nothing, or something, or little, in the way of titilation? Our mistake is in associating humor with levity. The existentialists have emphasized the prevalence of absurdity in our most tragic affairs, but most of us turn on solemnity, humor, piety, grief, love, respect, contempt, delight, as though they were wired sequentially in our sensibility and could not burn in interesting combinations. Poets tend to be emotionally more versatile—and good readers must learn to be also.

To illustrate the difference reception of tone makes in understanding a whole work (if a short one), I would like to consider Donne's popular Sonnet X:

> Death be not proud, though some have called thee
> Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not soe,
> For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
> Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me;
> From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
> Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow,
> And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,
> Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.
> Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
> And doth with poyson, warre, and sickness dwell
> And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,
> And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?
> One short sleepe past, we wake eternally,
> And death shall be no more, death, thou shalt die.

The opening lines and closing lines have a heroic ring that induces many readers to think of the poem as a courageous confrontation of the void, much like that of Henley's "Invictus." Henley is out of style; Donne is in—and those who would in another age beat their chests to Henley's tune now beat it to Donne's—out of time, I think, because they ignore the shifts and complexities of tone occurring between the beginning quatrain and the couplet.

Death demonstrably *is* mighty and dreadful, as Donne well knew, however we might whistle in the dark to avoid that recognition. The sonnet is one of frantic grasping at logical straws to palliate an inevitable conclusion quite the opposite of the surface meaning

of the final, firm, "death, thou shalt die." The first quatrain asserts a faith that those who die actually have eternal life. If death were a person and that person took pride in overthrowing men, he would be ironically mistaken, for men rise again. The poet says, like the little fox, "You can't catch me!" Had he stopped there, we might take this as a not unusual testament of the immortality of the soul.

The next two lines introduce a familiar conceit: death is but the image of rest and sleep; if rest and sleep, the "pictures," bring much pleasure, surely the original will bring much more. Compare with the logic-chopping lines from his poem, "Woman's Constancy":

> Or, as true deaths, true maryages untie,
> So lovers contracts, images of those
> Binde but till sleep, deaths image, them unloose?

Donne knows and we know that whatever superficial resemblances there may be between death and sleep, sleep is not an imitation of death, and the pleasure sleep brings is simply irrelevant. By reminding us of the fanciful conceits of love poems, of other sonnets, of his own poetic past, he is tipping us off to the real significance of this licensed exaggeration: I am proclaiming, he says, what I would like to believe, but it exceeds my confidence.

The next two lines seem to support the idea of death's pleasantness: "And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,/ Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie." But why do the best men die soonest? Because they throw themselves forward in battle, sacrifice themselves in some way? One cannot reflect without irony that the reward for virtue is an early death, and the interrupting line, "Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie" sounds like a prayer over the corpse, a tone of mourning which would be entirely inappropriate if we really believed death were a rest and a delivery.

Death is pleasant? He goes on to say that it is the agent of "Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,/ And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell." Of course, the ostensible reason for these lines is to diminish death's importance by association, by saying you are no good because you work for a bad master and come from a bad environment. But for these very reasons, death might be *more* mighty and dreadful (as might any criminal)—and the notion that death might be a source of pleasure is forgotten. Logic is forgotten:

for although the word "slave" suggests that death is weak, we find that it is the slave of mighty and dreadful powers, and if we had one moment of consolation thinking of death as a peaceful slumber, it is remarkable that the actual examples Donne selects are horrible: poison first, suggesting the cramps and writhings of stage deaths at Machivellian hands; war's slaughter; the putridness of disease. Pleasure, indeed!

But he goes back, in the next lines, to the theme of sleep: "And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,/ and better than thy stroake"; but now it is the sleep of drugs, the spells of witchcraft, which are, ironically, "better" than death's stroke. "Stroake" is a strong and sinister word, ending the argument, as it were, for the remainder of line 12 and the couplet take us back to the beginning thought.

The joke, bitter as it may be, is not far below the surface. If one were to say, "Why, death is nothing but fear: it's pleasant, just like sleep, and must be some kind of reward, since it gets the best men earliest (poor fellows); and besides, it has an unsavory background, associated with all kinds of horrors, and all that; and besides, once it's over, *it's over,*" we would see more easily the half-kidding, half-desperate tone, given increased irony by the noble fanfare with which it is introduced and ended. As such, the poem seems to me much more important, much more moving, than it would be if it pretended that death really *were* nothing to worry about, which is patent sentimental nonsense. Of course, too, as I have described it, the poem has more effect as religious persuasion than would a self-reliant-courage-in-the-face-of-fire Hennleyesque refusal to face facts. It throws the reader (if not into desperation) onto the bosom of the church. Death which *is* mighty and dreadful requires that we find some consolation.

My examples are all pre-Romantic. They might easily have been from twentieth century literature; but it would be much more difficult to find examples in the nineteenth century. The definition of poetry we hear most often from sophomores—it expresses a mood —seems, unfortunately, almost to be justified concerning English and American poetry of that period. *Tone* and *mood* are related, of course: but like a lightning bolt and a cloud. Tone is alive; it accompanies statement, colors it, clarifies it. But mood absorbs state-

ment, or holds it in suspension—nothing happens, nothing is said, an emotional state is preserved for its own sake. There are beauties in mood—particularly in music—but it hangs in the air, and one can become very weary of hanging in the air too long. When emotion becomes the object of statement rather than a means of statement, emphasis must be on sustaining it at the expense of the quick shifts of tone which catch delicate reverberations of thought and feeling. I must admit to prejudice—but I think that when nineteenth century poets are funny they are usually accidentally so. Not always, of course: Edward Lear or Lewis Carroll could write nonsense verse successfully—building up a mood by sheer connotation of words and syllables, and ribbing their creation at the same time. But when Coleridge, for example, writes nonsense—as in "Kubla Khan"—we have the embarrassing experience of hearing an earnest man out of his wits who holds us by the lapel and shouts gibberish at us, with some discernible rhetorical shape but no comprehensible intention. The trouble is, the man out of his wits wants us to take what he says *seriously*. I think it would be kind to Coleridge for us not to keep printing "Kubla Khan."

The reduction to absurdity of this approach to poetry was, of course, Edgar Allen Poe. He was quite conscious of what he was doing, he did it expertly, and the results are as ridiculous, by and large, as one might have predicted that they would be. If poetry has nothing more to do than express a mood, we may safely ignore it entirely—having troublesome enough moods of our own not to need self-indulgent poets to share theirs and sour our day.

I hope I have indirectly answered a question that must have arisen earlier. That is, if we are to be so flexible and multifold in our understanding of tone, how is judgment possible? How do we know we are not being too kind to writers in calling their absurdities intentional humor? How can we be sure Milton *knew* he was being absurd, that absurdity was part of his message?

As I said at the beginning, we cannot, in our present state of ignorance, be certain about much in literature—or, at least, I cannot. When the same *kind* of device occurs often in a writer—as the lapse into inarticulateness does in Shakespeare—one can begin to get some sense of probability. Similarly, if the poetry of a whole period seems to reinforce our judgment, as does the poetry of the seventeenth cen-

tury we may gain confidence. Although on the face of it, "Kubla Khan" and "Jabberwocky" are comparable, we can say there is little probability they were meant the same way because of what we know of their authors and the contexts in which the poems occurred. But this probability makes little practical difference. If you are left feeling that Dryden's pimple lines are unintentionally and inartistically repulsive and that "Kubla Khan" is a beautiful poem (and this is precisely what most readers *do* feel), I cannot verify that you are mistaken.

The usual retreat is into taste—which means into mysticism. We know, finally, what we like. We know where we are—but damned if we know how we got here, or whether we shouldn't be somewhere else. And there is a natural resistance to analysis (expressed by the sophomore as, "This stuff was written to be read and enjoyed, not to be picked apart," and by his teacher as, "A poem should not mean/ But be.") The skills that reading or writing call for are flexibility, responsiveness, a capacity for receiving a whole experience—sense, emotion, thought—all together, each element modifying and defining the other. Analysis is the very enemy of such total reception; orderly study (which would abstract laws from isolated series of phenomena) blurs the particular nature of each poem, each line, each word. "Go not too near a house of rose," says Emily Dickinson—and we might apply this injunction to reading poetry: "The depredation of a breeze/ or ununduation of a dew/ Alarm its walls away." The measuring instrument distorts the measurement. "In insecurity to lie," Emily says, "Is joy's insuring quality." If we apply that to reading, we see that our understanding must be dynamic rather than static, compounded more of wisdom than knowledge; it must settle on the stream like a leaf to know its most delicate currents.

But to retreat into taste is to give up the fight too easily, to stop asking questions and seeking to understand. There is, after all, a difference between a house of rose and a poem—in that the latter, no matter how often you alarm its walls away by looking too closely, will reshape itself and endure, more strongly, even, for having suffered analysis. I do not forsee a day when some literary litmus paper will be developed to detect the acidity of humor in a passage of sobriety, but I am also not ready to sit back with a shrug of self-

satisfied resignation in the face of mystery. I have meant this essay as an invitation to inquiry, not to transcendentalism.

Such inquiry might take the form of more exact description of some of the terms I have employed here. Machines cannot tell us when we are amused—but we can be more alert to the possibility that perhaps we *should* be. We can recognize more fully the importance of tone in communication. Perhaps some archaic and abandoned conventions of punctuation, capitalization, italics, might be revived, or new ones brought into practice, which would help writers clarify signals. (I think the editorial practice of modernization of such details of historical texts as spelling and punctuation does much to blur communication; we should learn to accomodate ourselves to the message, not change it to suit our minds.) I suspect we need more educational emphasis upon reading aloud (and memorization)—and one line of inquiry which suggests itself is comparative study of comprehension of tone among students who have and those who have not read a given text aloud. At any rate, the message sent by a Chaucer or Shakespeare or Milton or Dryden is important enough to make us patient in decoding. And we need more subtle instruments than our hearts to tell us when we've got it right.

On Watching the Construction of a Skyscraper

By BURTON RAFFEL

Nothing sings from these orange trees,
Rindless steel as smooth as sapling skin,
Except a crane's brief wheeze
And all the muffled, clanking din
Of rivets nosing in like bees.

BURTON RAFFEL's translation of "Six Anglo-Saxon Riddles" was published in our Spring, 1959, issue. Until recently a lawyer with a Wall Street firm, now an "apprentice philanthropoid," Mr. Raffel's translations, original poetry, and fiction, as well as legal articles, have appeared in a variety of publications.

The Crow

By EVA BEARD

The crow immediately out of egg
must learn croformity, the right
croway of life, otherwise he
may find himself outside, beyond, below
the sooty cawing
over the new planted cornfield, actually studying on
what really, not just mere
shiny black feathers, wide clumsy wings, crow toes
crocroaking voice
is crow

quite plainly not
walker, soarer, talker, singer, here however
there might be outlook for a few
gifted young birds, he himself has
now and then tried a few notes, a word or so
on a passing woodchuck, red squirrel, response
negative, blue jays, robins, catbirds seeming even to
harbor the most profound aversion
to crow, you would think so chatty a little creature as
the house wren would be just a trifle
simpatico, no

EVA BEARD lives in the art colony of Woodstock, New York, and her writings range from horticultural articles for the New York *Times* and *American Home,* to sketches of early naturalist visitors to America for *Frontiers,* to poetry such as this.

and what with the lack of
family life, most of the dark crobeautiful enjoying
croway cacawing, eating, flapping about
in regiments, it all adds up to
a long lonesome, is this all

winter, the sky empty of noisy dark
southbound siblings, the crow evermore
croalone, finds being other
hard when there is nobody
to be other than, the man woman child
who serve meals of a sort not
kin enough for otherness, they do seem
to want to learn crow, no harm in teaching them a few of the
very simplest croconcepts which he being croalone
does not accept but you have to begin
somewhere, it will serve the winter and they do not know
he does not know
what is crow

courage, spring, the far distant high
cacawing louder each moment, that dark crobeautiful with whom he
attempted last season to discuss
spring whence why and what
will be overhead again, courage, this time if she flies
high screaming off into the dangerous blue between wind clouds
after her, the answer is
undoubtedly there, having to do
with what
is crow

Very Well

By HOLLIS SUMMERS

Very well, very well, very well, very well,
I respect his circumstance,
Remembering his father's arrogance
And his mother's compulsion to tidy hell

And the unfortunate seasons of his upbringing
In an utterly withering place
Wearing his straight winter face
Among the most odious of odious siblings;

And I understand the universal hex
Placed upon men of paradox
Who walk both liberal and orthodox
Among depressions, wars, and sexes;

I accept him totally, with study
And the aid of your mental riches,
But you are both sons of bitches
And I am tired of loving everybody.

HOLLIS SUMMERS' poetry has appeared on our pages in the past, as well as in other journals. A professor at Ohio University, he has published three novels, and his latest collection of verse was *The Walks Near Athens.*

Mindyah

By GEORGE BLUESTONE

■ Even before he looked up through a snow of feathers, away from the tallow skin where the faint lice nestled, Yonkel-the-chicken-plucker knew she was there. From the scrunch of old shoes he could always tell. It was Mindyah-the-crazy-lady.

Today he was afraid to look up. Still, he knew it was foolish to delay, because Mindyah always found him. Sometimes she went right to the back where Yonkel performed the ritual slaughter, and Mindyah would catch him looping a neck to let the blood, or scalding a bird in the boiling tub, or burning off pinfeathers on the gas range (I clean the pinfeathers, too, he would say, no extra charge). A *shochet* the whole neighborhood was proud of. Sometimes, after sundown, after the *balabustahs* had tossed parsley in the soup and the smell was teasing the hall, she would even climb the four flights to his apartment.

From long experience he knew what she would do the minute she entered his store. Without even a "Good morning, Yonkel," she would force her mouth into lines of lamentation, the way the devil prays, he imagined. Finally she'd ask.

"You know what Alex done?" she said like all the injured of the world. "He turned off the radiator till November. He says it don't get cold till November. I ask you, Yonkel, this morning I wasn't shivering? My bones obey the calendar?"

Alex-the-Polack-janitor was a favorite butt who took her abuse on the broad tub of his back and never seemed to mind. He owned

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the house where Mindyah lived, also the coal and ice shed next door, but a stranger would never know. The black dust rusted in his skin had effectively disguised him. He didn't look like the owner.

"A landlord he is?" Mindyah squeaked, as if a filament were loose in her throat. "By me he's still a janitor."

In his own building Alex burned wood instead of coal and his tenants suffered keenly. Yesterday, after all those years, Yonkel had finally seen the place where Mindyah lived. (Was it only yesterday?) He hoped he would never have to see it again.

She had caught him snaring a hen in one of the cages and had asked him above flapping wings to screw in a bulb for her because Alex-the-Polack, drunk near the boiler, was in no condition to do it. Yonkel had wiped his hands and gone. When he saw the room, little larger than a closet, his heart turned over, and he understood why she'd wanted him to come *now*. It was the only bulb in the room.

He didn't enjoy remembering the place, those papers piled to the ceiling, the rusty hunks of iron set in a row, lifting themselves like a sectioned snake over a chair whose stuffing had popped. He could hardly turn around. He had screwed in the bulb and run.

He swore never again to yell at the kids in the neighborhood who called her a witch and said he gave her money to stave off the evil eye.

He had known, of course, that she harvested old papers, rags, bits of string, wire from packing cases, but he'd never known where she stored it. Abie-the-junk-man swore she never came to him, that she had, in fact, turned down generous offers to let him clean out the room. "A whole dollar I offered, but the woman said no." Yonkel chalked it off to perversity, lumped it with her other quirks, like insisting on free pumpernickel heels from the baker, or tilting empty milk cartons until she collected a pint. Once Yonkel tried to tell her it wasn't nice for the neighbors, raking the garbage that way. Maybe it was all right for the bums passing through, the scavengers with hair ropes and potato sacks, but it was wrong for a lady from there, especially one who didn't have to.

Mindyah didn't have to. The block took sufficient care of its needy. It had made it's own *pushke,* a private kitty for Mindyah alone, saving Rabbi Kupperman the trouble of doling out her share. It was more personal that way. "*Tzedakah,*" Yonkel would say,

scratching his skull cap, his forehead white and bony like the rabbi's at Yeshiva. "What is *tzedakah?* Duty. Righteousness. You don't ask, you give. It'll keep her out of the garbage." And when she had gone on poking anyway, almost spitefully it seemed, Yonkel had always defended her. "Duty. Not charity. Would Maimonides have judged her?" So what if she smelled like old stoves and the women whispered "Shtinker?" Even Sarah, his wife, dead these fifteen years, had spoken unequivocally: "Give. The woman suffers."

He remembered Moishe-from-the-appetizing-store asking him many years ago: "She comes to you, too?"

"She comes," Yonkel had said. "What's a few pennies? A little here, a little there, she'll live."

He set an example by letting her come around, listened to her voice like a frail metal bird's, even when she didn't make sense. And when she took to making her rounds like a collector, he looked the other way. If nothing else, his daily tribute had bought a clear conscience. After Mindyah left, he would try to forget, for how can goodness be goodness if it gloats on itself . . . ?

"You remember that Hymie-the-post-office-clerk? Second floor back? He caught a cold, a little sniffle, no more. One night up there and he had pneumonia. I'm telling you, that Alex-the-Polack killed him . . ."

The woman's alone, Yonkel had often explained. At least Yonkel had his family. Every Passover they came to him, all fifteen of them, including the grandchildren. Even though Sarah was gone, the seders were really worth waiting for, the daughters coming early to cook and take down the dishes, and then the rest of them, until the small apartment was bulging and they overflowed into the hall. Of course, the grandchildren were the delight of his old age, but most of all he enjoyed waiting for Samuel, son of David, son of Yonkel. He regretted that Sarah hadn't lived to see Samuel a man. She would have been proud of him, proud of the upright bearing, the incredible eyes. "They took one look at the eyes," he liked to tell Moishe, "and right away they gave him the scholarship." He was sorry she wasn't there that day Samuel went off to college, to a place far north of the city, making last-minute visits in a tailored suit, fussed over by cousins and aunts, like a soldier going to a war which everyone believes in. It seemed only yesterday the boy had climbed his lap to

braid his locks, serious even then, and David nodding over a glassful of raisins, the raisins plump from the tea. Who could have known when Sarah spawned David in that glacial apartment, where they'd lived when they first came over, that Yonkel's eyes, ruined from long hours of fleecing, would burn again in Samuel?

It wasn't bad now, Yonkel often told himself, but it had been bad once. He still shuddered to remember those years when winter sluiced through the slats, and no one came, and the air was so cold even the lice died, and he'd have to bring himself to life over the burner, until they shut off the gas because he couldn't pay. Afterwards, the women began appearing with hard coins knotted in their handkerchiefs, letting him know the bad times were over. Even after they put up the big market on the Avenue, the women came to him because they didn't like the way the *goyim* wrapped the fryers in cellophane. If they couldn't see Yonkel do their slaughtering, they didn't feel right. They needed his prayer, needed his smoking knife dipped in the koshering brine. They came to him in his oilskin apron, the smell of pungent grain to reassure them, more comfortable in his place where they could see the chickens alive in their coops, red crowns angry through the slats, the way they remembered them as children in Kiev or Cracow. "A butcher I can't see I don't trust," they would say.

Sarah hadn't lived to see the fabulous week he sold four hundred and thirty hens, the poultry going so fast he couldn't pluck them all, and Samuel had to be called in to help. Now at least there was Samuel to work for. And because there was purpose to his work, Yonkel developed an affection for his fowl, felt a comfort in their clucking. He came to know that split second before he drew his knife like a pencil, when they seemed to understand there was nothing more to do, before the breast stopped breathing, not in fear but in resignation, and no clucking either. "Go ahead, *shochet*," they seemed to say, "this is a thing we both must do." It was a lesson, a real lesson. Each dispatch was a short history of the world, and Yonkel respected his teachers. His poultry had taught him the need for charity. Without *tzedakah*, what are we? he would ask. Wolves, that's what. And so he'd pluck his birds religiously, the way old women clean the toes for burial, knowing there are some things that only ritual can dignify. Yonkel was a thoughtful man. . . .

"I knock and I hock, but that Alex will not budge. His wood burns up, that's the end. You could freeze he wouldn't lift a finger. I'd tell him to burn paper, he wants to save *gelt,* but I'm afraid he'd really do it."

A lot you got to hock, Yonkel thought. Yesterday, in her room, Mindyah had caught him looking. "I'll clean, I'll clean, don't worry," she'd said, avoiding the skyscraper of papers, "not all, but some," drawing her shawl around her as if he'd judged her housekeeping.

Later, after he'd descended the stairs, he discovered the garbage barrel on the ground floor beside the basement door, where he'd gone to throw the bulb.

It was there he had found it.

He didn't know what struck him about it, the package strapped in rubber bands and wadded the size of a brick—a large brick. Maybe it was just the definite shape in that clutter of bones and coffee grounds and egg shells. He'd poked open a corner, and when he saw the gray edges he hadn't stopped to think. He'd simply started running, hadn't paused until he'd heaved himself against the protective table at home.

The bills were so worn it was like counting laundry, not ones but twenties, and he remembered sorting them shakily, not daring to think of anything else, fixed on the act of counting to avoid guilty thoughts. He'd remembered to draw the shades and bolt the door. When he leaned back tired at last, he was ten bills short of five hundred. He had arranged the bills in piles of fifty, the habit of precision that came from years of adding everything in black crayon on butcher paper. Yonkel had a reputation for never making a mistake. They even said that Samuel had inherited his brains, a real *Yiddisheh kup.* It had taken a long time for the enormity of it to sink in, like watching the fuse on a dynamite stick. Nearly ten thousand dollars!

Needless to say, early this morning he'd committed an error—who wouldn't?—and Mrs. Karple-from-the-third-floor, his first customer always, had frowned in accusing surprise.

"What? What? A mistake?" he'd panicked, as if she could see through his skull. His mouth felt coated with ashes. "So? Once in fifty years, I'm entitled, no?"

He had furiously crayoned the error. He remembered the chick-

ens clucking something awful, the way they will before a storm. How could he keep his mind on Mrs. Karple, her demanding bulk stuffed in a housecoat that folded round her like a kimono? With the money sitting upstairs, snared in rubber bands, next to the menorah in the bottom drawer, how could anybody concentrate?

"Yonkel, a nice fat one," he'd heard her say. "And please, it shouldn't be blue. I don't like blue."

"Since when do I give blue?" he'd said indignantly, trying to hurry her out of there. But his mind kept snagging his work. Too many problems were buzzing his head, a regular hive of cancellations. Who had left it there? The hacking furrier who lived in Mindyah's building? Some secret Rothchild in their midst? Maybe that Alex?

The idea stunned him. Alex-the-*shicker*-janitor. Who else had that kind of money? The more Yonkel thought about it the more convinced he became. Just like a *goy,* he thought accusingly, burning wood for profit, growing fat on frozen blood. Who did he think the coal dust fooled? It would serve him right to lose his hoard.

But suppose someone found out? They'd accuse him of stealing, take him to court; Yonkel would be disgraced. So what should he do? Keep quiet? Yell in the streets how Alex bled them? Take it to the police station? They knew how to handle things like this, the *Irisheh* cops. Then he'd remembered the precinct station, a heap of red rubble, and the stiff bearing of the officers going in and out. He was wracked with fear of uniforms, the dark ancestral loathing. The sight of cartridges in a belt, a billy club on a hip, still raised hackles in his blood. Who then? Who?

He'd thought suddenly of what a nice present it would make for Samuel. The boy had worked like a peasant since before his *bar mitzvàh,* bussing dishes in the summers, pushing dress racks in the winters, wearing the thick blue muffler that Sarah had knit for David and that David had passed along. With that money in the bank, Samuel would be free of crabbed labor, the kind of long hours that sapped a boy's strength. It would be a gift from the *tzaddik* to help him through. Yonkel fairly shook with the thought of it. . . .

Mrs. Karple had gone at last, and now the flesh of the bird was clean, and he was aware that Mindyah's long lament was coming to an end. Yonkel stood up wearily, gripping the hard feet like a handle. Mindyah erased his dream.

So why was he ashamed to look her in the face? Because he'd asked every question but one? Denying the wordless doubt that buzzed at the base of his skull? Why couldn't he even bring himself to reach in his pocket for Mindyah's ritual pittance?

"Yonkel, you saw a package, maybe?" she asked at last. He felt as if someone had kicked his ribs. He squinted painfully, wondering why she didn't come right out and accuse him. It was just what he'd been waiting for.

"Package? What package?" he asked, holding the chicken like a club.

She spoke through broken teeth. "A package, in newspapers. Maybe so big. No, so. I left it I don't know where—Ai-i-e-e-e, Yonkel," she moaned like a sorrowful wind. "What a mind I used to have—like a whip it was—"

Yonkel didn't know he'd decided, but in his tongue the decision was made. "No, no package, Mindyah. There's so much junk by Alex. You tried everywhere? The room? The hall? What would I do with a package?"

"So?" she shrugged. "I'll ask by Isaac, I'll ask by Moishe. Maybe—" He was appalled at her ease. When she grated the sawdust, dragging one foot, a bundle of grievances wrapped in a shawl, the sound was like salt to his wounds. He was glad to see her go.

When he went back to singe the pinfeathers he was so nervous he burned his fingers.

That night, in his apartment, he lighted some candles and folded his hands to think. Sometimes he would make strange gestures, tapping the table with the stick of his finger, or swivelling his thumb like a scholar's, and sometimes he would drop his head in his hands as if lost in grief or in prayer.

Away from the chickens, away from the feed, his shame fanned steadily to anger. For years she made fools of us. For years! He trembled so hard he had to hold on to the table. A *schnorrer* like her, a beggar, how could she do it? A penny here, a nickel there— Taking money even when Isaac's boy was sick in the hospital with chicken pox. Amazed, he pushed back the candles and spread a sheet of paper. He gave vent to his instinct for numbers. How many years had she been coming? Twenty? No, she must have been there when David was a boy, because Yonkel remembered smacking him once for calling Mindyah crazy. Suppose she averaged a dollar a day for

thirty years and lived on nothing at all? She could have done it! The figure was staggering. And to think he'd blamed poor Alex!

The more he totalled, the madder he felt. Yonkel, you fool! How many chickens have to be plucked to make ten thousand dollars? Yonkel scribbled furiously, as if his stark additions would keep the hound away. He was tallying their duty, Isaac's and Moishe's, the women's and his. He winced from the rifling image: the whole block, gathered in a circle, tossing coins down an empty well. *Tzedakah!*

Still, there was something he wasn't facing, something coiled like a punishing serpent around his figures. He could have forgiven her miserly hoarding, could have forgiven the brilliant swindle her begging had become. But why hadn't she used the money? Why? For this he could not forgive her. He thought of harpies with dried dugs and daggered nails: a flight of Mindyah's sisters.

Why? She reminded him of those blindfolded oxen walking in circles, turning the heavy stones of a wheel mill. For what? At least the oxen ground grain for usable bread. What did Mindyah grind? Air! How could she do it, year after year, piling up cash in that rat's nest of hers, the room a regular junkyard?

Yonkel felt profoundly faulted, as if God had wrenched the world in its socket to play some inscrutable joke. "*Got, Got,*" he moaned, "you lift the skin to my lips and tell me not to drink. Doesn't money like life require a purpose? Otherwise, what are we? A withering of skin, a drying of bones, a bed of straw alone. *Got-in-himmel,* tell me what to do."

For three days Yonkel wrestled like Job with his affliction. In the poultry shed the women noticed the change, how the chickens weren't plucked so clean anymore, how Yonkel was growing careless. "What is wrong with Yonkel?" they whispered. They came away disappointed. Once a headless chicken got away and bled all over the floor, a thing that hadn't happened since the *shochet* was an apprentice. Another time, drawing the knife for a kill, Yonkel stupidly pared his finger and had to swathe it all day in clumsy toilet paper. "Yonkel's getting old," the *balabustahs* buzzed.

At night, Yonkel's dreams were hot, Mindyah's face and Samuel's bumping each other like fiery balloons. The sheets felt like ropes. He knew no peace. "For myself?" he was heard interrogating

the poultry on his knee, "do I want it for myself?" Since Samuel was ten he'd been getting up at five to deliver papers in that P.S. something-or-other, while Mindyah hived his money. All that time, Yonkel thought, I could have been saving for him. He'd heard of beggars who died with thousands of dollars pinned to their rags, but he'd never really believed it. It just goes to show you, he thought. All arguments choked him. He came to curse the bundle in his drawer.

On the fourth day he went to see the rabbi.

"Rebbeh," he said, beginning at once, "I'll put it to you plain."

They'd disputed there often, over the walnut table, against the brown musty books that rose imperially behind glass cases in the rabbi's study, so that after a few minutes Yonkel would forget how small it was. It was the proper setting for intricate thoughts.

When Yonkel was done, feeling unburdened and clean, he looked expectantly to Rabbi Kupperman. The rabbi fingered his dark excelsior beard as if to make sure it was still there, placed a finger alongside his nose and closed his eyes. The rabbi was still a young man, but everyone who heard him speak vouched for his wisdom and passion.

The rabbi was talking before he opened his eyes. He spoke Yiddish like a gentleman. "Yonkel, when you put it plain, the problem disappears." He was properly respectful of Yonkel's age. "The woman saved, the woman lost, the woman deserves. When she came to you, came to Moishe, came to Isaac, did you say, 'Mindyah, for what will you use the money, for what?' No. You said, 'Here, Mindyah, take, better us than relief.' Did you say, 'Mindyah, this *gelt* is for cottage cheese, and this for herring?'

"Understood? What was understood? Since when does a Jew make a covenant for charity? So she saved? We all save. So she saved too much? Who's to decide? Yonkel, how much is too much? A hundred? A thousand? Five thousand?

"She's a fake, you say? So who isn't? If God removed all the fakers, who would pray on Yom Kipper? Maybe she has her reasons. How do you know? Mindyah comes here to pray, she lights candles on Friday night. Maybe she has plans for a decent life, maybe she wants to pass on the money to those who come after.

"All right, so she earned the money by begging. So maybe

through all those years she forgot how to live. Isn't that the greater pity, Yonkel? Shouldn't our hearts cry out to her? So you feel betrayed. But in paying her, have we not paid ourselves? Maybe what really torments us is conscience, bought conscience, one big bundle for everybody to see. Let her be, Yonkel. She may have twisted the coins of your righteousness, but she has reminded us that prudence is what we make it. She measures us where we fail to measure ourselves. Let her be, Yonkel. If she has done wrong, God will judge her, not you.

"Now you claim you want the money for Samuel, not yourself. Well, Mindyah did not want it for *herself*. After all, isn't Samuel part of yourself? No, admit, Yonkel, you did not come here to define justice, to shave off arguments. You came here for assurances. But I have no assurances. And don't worry about Samuel. He has the strength of Bar Kochba and the brains of Akiba. He'll be a scholar without you.

"Go give her back, Yonkel. The money will restore her to life. At least she won't go on begging the way she has."

The *shochet's* elbows were leaning on the table, his chin hinged on his hands. He wanted to continue, but his tongue had lost its nerve. The rabbi's points were too keen, his position too clear, his persuasion too abstract. He had no sense of blur, that was his failing. Did he think he could draw a line that way, as thin as his knife after honing?

Still, Rabbi Kupperman had made his incision, had excavated motives that Yonkel himself was not aware of. Shame burned him profoundly. He took his leave in confusion.

On his way home, Yonkel felt no better. Not even in sublime isolation, where a man's imaginings usually show him to advantage, could Yonkel justify himself. What would Sarah have done? Sarah, who never said much but who always made sense when she talked. He missed her steady wisdom, the way she could cut with a single phrase through hours of thorny debate. He felt dull and lifeless. The street oppressed him, the spiderwork of fire escapes scaling the outraged brick, the buckled sidewalk he had to walk around, the cat screaming like a baby somewhere, the women in pin-curls nudging their carriages. He felt as raw and gray as the weather.

It wasn't the guilt, but the fear of guilt, that finally decided him.

When Yonkel came to his house, the steps of the stoop seemed difficult. He was afraid to walk in, but the angry door devoured him. Ten seconds later, before the rattling had died, he was out in the street again. Half way to Mindyah's house he remembered the bundle. What's the matter with me? he wondered. I'm getting *fadradled* like her.

Feeling heavy and defeated, he went for the bundle. Every step was painful. It couldn't end like this, it couldn't. He must give it to her in such a way that Samuel's interest would not be forgotten. He would remember the boy in his plea and Samuel's name would draw her, like a pearl in the guts of a chicken. Otherwise, rabbi or no rabbi, giving back the money was a mockery.

He felt guilty again. His thoughts brandished cunning hooks of self-interest. He tried to imagine himself on Maimonides' Golden Ladder. Yonkel, you *shtunk,* he chastised himself with the heel of his hand, you are lower than number one!

He thought of leaving it outside her door, then decided against it. Why should he sneak it back? That would be descending to her level. He would confront her honestly, praise the boy extravagantly, remind Mindyah of the cold winters he'd swung the dress racks down the Avenue, make her see the black snow muffling the wheels, and how one summer a loaded tray, packed like a porcelain flower, had come down on Samuel's hand, cutting the innocent thumb. Then she'd offer the reward herself.

He moved along dutifully, enjoying the taste of his dream.

And if she doesn't, Yonkel, if she doesn't?

In the hall, climbing to Mindyah's room, his head rattled like a bagful of shells. He smelled onions cooking and the strong disinfectant that was always there when Alex's woman came to scrub. At least when she knew that her secret was out, she'd have to clean up her papers, throw away the iron, maybe even move out altogether, rent one of the units in the new apartment building up near the market. He'd shame her into dignity, sponge away the humiliating distortions of her face. Otherwise it was madness, all madness.

The door opened a crack, and a chain appeared across her chin like an extra mouth.

"Mindyah, open." Yonkel said, huddling the package under his coat. "I have something for you."

The door slammed, links rattled, and she was so long fussing that Yonkel forgot to kiss the *mezuzah* on the way in. He tried to remain unaware of the smell of old stoves. The bundle seemed to burn in his chest. He had folded the newspaper down again, hitched the rubber bands in place, making the bundle neat as an envelope, so that it seemed he'd never done it violence.

"By the barrels behind the store—I found it," he said, uncovering at last. "Tell me, Mindyah, it's yours? The thing you were looking for?" Yonkel's hand was trembling. His little lie made him feverish. He observed her shaking her head, heard muttered syllables behind the coop of her mouth. No? Was she saying no? His heart leaped hard against his ribs. He wasn't going to live much longer if things went on like this.

Mindyah was groaning as if he'd just located a broken bone. He heard her clear at last: "Ai-i-e-e-e, Yonkel, that's the one."

He held back perversely, wanting her to reach for it, to show some sign of feeling. He wanted a small ray of delight to baste the creases in her face. But all she did was stand there, groaning cold, refusing to back away, refusing to bump the latest piece of junk she'd hauled up there, the skeleton of a carriage, its ribs roughed over with rust.

"You want maybe some tea with lemon, Yonkel?" she asked, blinking.

There was nothing to do but hand it over. He hawked her movements, watching for some glint of avarice, but all she did was dandle it once, then toss it into the lap of her wounded chair.

Still, he knew she must be feeling *something* or she'd never have asked him to tea. For the first time in thirty years he'd betrayed her into service. Borne on that fragile sign, the *shochet* experienced a surge of triumph. Joshua outside Jericho could not have known such a heady victory.

Already he could see Abie-the-junk-man cleaning up her room, and the moving men wondering why she'd called them, since there was nothing to move, and Mindyah going at last, leaving it all behind her like a heap of shucked clothes.

Of course, they would have to show her how to work the self-service elevator, assure her it was perfectly safe to walk the rugs. But it would be a new Mindyah, a regal Mindyah, they would have

to coach. She would buy a decent dress, make an appointment with the hairdresser, maybe take the full course at the Women's Turkish Bath, a regular *mikveh,* just like a bride. The change would clear her eyes, straighten her walk, treat her features to fine alloys of decency and poise.

And even if she did none of this, even if she stayed where she was, she would have her self-respect. Relieved of her grubby rounds, the block would feel free of responsibility. That was the least they could expect.

How Yonkel would enjoy their amazement! The whole neighborhood running to him, Moishe-from-the-appetizing-store, with bits of sauerkraut still clinging to his fingers, and Isaac with the chamois apron, jingling coins in his pockets, saying how the reporters were going up there and how her picture would be in the *Vörwarts.* And when he'd see their wasted rage, a belated version of his own, and hear them asking, "It's our money, too, no, Yonkel?" he'd be ready for them, setting his finger alongside his nose to declare, "The woman saved, the woman lost, the woman deserves." Then he'd lean back with the chicken in his lap, the skin rich and yellow, to tell his delicious story. So what if the reporters cast *him* in a favorable light? After all, he had trudged up five flights to return the bundle, a regular neighborhood Lincoln.

"Listen, Mindyah," he said, breathless from his vision. "I'd *like* to sip tea," wondering where in that clutter she could manage it anyway, "but there's nobody minding the chickens. I stayed too long already."

He waited for thank you, waited for joy, waited for recognition. But when he saw her reach behind, scraping her thumb along the corroded chrome of the carriage frame, he decided to leave her alone. These things take time, he consoled himself, backing toward the door.

"At least wash your face," he said.

"You don't like the face? All right, I'll wash," she said, and her voice was screwed with resolution. It was there he hung his hopes.

The next morning he was up earlier than usual, unboarding about the same time Isaac picked up the early edition. He'd dreamed of feast days, of Samuel's wonder, of glowing pride in the women's eyes when they heard what he'd done. And when Mrs. Karple came

in, he had a hard time concentrating on what she said because he was waiting, not for an explosion exactly, but for the results of explosion.

Mrs. Karple was insisting that Yonkel dismember a roasting chicken. Last mother's day her daughter-in-law had given her an electric deep-fry, and it had sat in the closest all summer. Now her son-the-pharmacist was insisting that she at least *try* it, just once, "the girl's feelings shouldn't be hurt."

"Cut up a roasting chicken, Mrs.?" Yonkel asked, still capable of pride. "You mean cut like the market cuts? Why not ask to marinate in milk?"

"So only this once," Mrs. Karple pleaded. "It'll poison us, I know, deep-fry, but this way my son won't holler on me."

Would she come in wearing a new dress, or a brand new fall coat, the wool as light as snow? Or sensible shoes instead of cracked relics as flappy as mules? She'd be hard to recognize, whatever she did, Yonkel thought with pleasure, and that would be only right. She'd hand him the envelope with Samuel's name, press it on him gratefully, as careful and pale as a slow convalescent . . .

"Listen, missus, you seen the chickens by the market?" Yonkel said in a reflex of habit. "You seen maybe how white they was, like they was bleached with poison or something? By Yonkel the chickens are yellow. Why ruin a perfectly good bird?"

It was as far as he ever went toward advertising. The broadside ads, the ugly handbills, the cut-throat come-ons, they were for the *goyim* on the Avenue, not him. . . . Or maybe Rabbi Kupperman would let it slip out, and Isaac and Moishe would be there first, couriers swift with the news, or maybe a reporter lugging a pencil and a camera big as a suitcase. . . .

"Aaah, Yonkel, I wouldn't go by them," Mrs. Karple was assuring him. "A chicken from you, it makes a nice soup, not a pail of dish water."

"So a roaster you want cut like a fryer? That's your last word?" And when she shrugged, saying yes just this once, Yonkel set to work, uprooting feathers, his fingers going like bobbins, knowing exactly how to free the quills without scoring the skin. Yes, the *balabustahs* knew what they were doing when they came to him. And when they knew how he'd behaved with Mindyah, they'd come

even more, out of some voiceless loyalty for what he'd done. . . . If I couldn't help Samuel, at least I'll help her. . . . He had to fight hard to keep from seeing himself as a Moses leading her from some accursed land. Deliverance had scoured him. He was beginning to feel like a boy again, waiting for his bride to appear, already delighting in the sight of her, the bright festive blouse, the handsome stitched skirt, the scent of flowers in her hair.

Or would she behave simply, merely slipping Samuel's money underneath his door . . . ?

"Yonkel, I'm going by the bakery. I'll be back," Mrs. Karple said. She's no bride, he thought, watching her step heavily into the street.

Just then he saw Mindyah, or rather his eyes saw her. His brain lagged by seconds, refusing its clue. She seemed more hunched than usual, and when he observed the grainy skin, the practiced face, the undiminished suffering, his hand moved involuntarily toward the pocket under the oilskin, trying to remember what change he carried. He knew what she was after. It wasn't until she started complaining about Alex-the-Polack that he understood the terrible knot in his chest, the cold rime that suddenly gripped his heart. Nothing had changed. Her shoes flapped like mules, her brown tattered skirt dropped to her ankles, her shawl hugged her like a shroud, refusing to hold its twill. In the sawdust, her feet had raked accusing tracks. At least she could have combed her hair, Yonkel thought wildly.

"That *shicker,* that Alex," she whined, "he's too drunk to move the garbage."

The next thing he knew, the half-plucked chicken lay over the rim of the bin, as if the fall had killed it. The stool had fiercely toppled. And as he shoved the dollar into her leather palm, his eyes avoiding her hair, the black scoriating cords that laced her forehead, Yonkel knew what he would find. In the gummed eyes he saw it already, not fear at his sudden violence, but huddled cunning, brutally deaf to his shouts: *"Gotenyiu,* take it, take it and go! Just please get out of my sight!"

Southern Tale

By LUCIEN STRYK

From deep in the town the dancers' stomp
Cannot rouse him more,
Where he hangs like a cracked bell;
Dark engulfs the man, the ashen cross.

The girl steps back and dreams—
O he the night and she the slippery moon,
And high the cotton flew!
It was like swimming in the river,
Water pressing to her deeps,
Ropes the arms that pulled her down,
The river banging on the wharf.

She looks away, her whiteness
Blending with the moon,
And hears the flies
Maddened by the smell of horse,
The smell of flesh.

From deep in the town the dancers' stomp
Cannot rouse him more:
The arms, the tongue,
The giant thighs are mute.

LUCIEN STRYK has published two volumes of verse in England, where he studied under the G.I. Bill. He has been a visiting lecturer at Niigata University in Japan and is presently teaching at Northern Illinois University.

■ DISCUSSION

Shoring Up the Bulwark of a New Frontier

By OTTO KRASH

Professors Villemain and Champlin[1] are too realistic in their endeavor to extend frontiers in philosophy of education. Too realistic, that is, for pragmatists. Dewey claims experience central to all things that are characteristically human, and Villemain and Champlin qualify that experience as generically qualitative or esthetic and quote Dewey to reinforce their claim.

This is too realistic, because if experience "just is" and qualities "just are," the term that designates this ground of inquiry must be qualitative experience. The generic term, however, must be *experience*. The raw datum is *experience*. A characteristic of this experience is that it is qualitative; therefore, pragmatically speaking, V. and C. are theorizing from this point forward. They can't have their realistic cake of acknowledging reality (i.e., experience) and their pragmatistic cake of analysis, too, by claiming their analysis as a peculiar state of nature reflected in discourse. This is the realist fallacy of claiming correspondence between propositions and a state of nature, an identification of discourse with that to which discourse refers. Experience, yes—if that is the ground of pragmatic theory. But qualitative experience, no—for that is describing a particular characteristic of the human condition, not a raw datum. V. and C. are theorizing about experience, not reflecting a state of affairs.

But this criticism holds for Dewey as well. The early Dewey had experience as the ground of inquiry. The later Dewey held inquiry as

[1]Francis T. Villemain and Nathaniel L. Champlin, "Frontiers for an Experimentalist Philosophy of Education," *Antioch Review*, Fall 1959.

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the ground of inquiry.[2] If all is experience, what could the non-experiential be? Animalism? No, there are kinds of experience, not an all-experiential whole; therefore, some criterion for designating kinds of experience must be the ground of investigation. Dewey was theorizing too. Standards are in theory, not in experience! except as the theoretician cannot operate pragmatically anywhere outside, above, or transcendent of experience. We must begin somewhere in theory in order to make distinctions among kinds of experience or any description of presences, or locations of datum.

If experience just is, then nothing will permit us to describe it without theory, and to describe experience as qualitative is an achievement of the theoretical work of V. and C. The term "qualitative" is descriptive *of* experience, even if this is descriptive of the "generic" in experience. The term "experience" is also a distinction, and both terms are theoretical terms. The terms cannot "just be," for *that* (experience) is what these terms refer to.

To recognize these ground distinctions will prevent the authors of the theory of quality from being led into the following unsupportable claim; that "qualities are themselves thoughts" (p. 347). In this dubious insight, they would confront prior claims on thought as an activity, or memory of an activity, or an activity symbolized. Not a kind of activity, mind you, but activity as such, symbolized.[3] This conflict would have V. and C. pitted against Perry as to which of them had the prior claim on the *real* character of thought. Pragmatically, what real service does this afford philosophers and philosophers of education determined to choose how we ought to think? "What are our choices among kinds of thought processes?" seems to be an infinitely more purposeful inquiry, especially for pragmatists searching for controls with which to extend thought. What would anyone do with an accurate description of how we do think stupidly? Change our mind? Or decide that we really ought not think the way we do? Isn't our task to choose among the many ways that men say we think; and, especially, to choose among the many theories of thought that serve as the bearers of criteria and standards of selection?

Our problem is one of inquiry, not of reality.[4]

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[2]John Dewey and Arthur F. Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1949), Appendix; specific reference, pp. 317-18.

[3]See Ralph Barton Perry, *Recent Philosophical Tendencies* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912; George Braziller, 1955), Chapter XII, "A Realistic Theory of Mind."

[4]cf. Dewey, on taking problems within the context of inquiry, not in the traditional ontological context. *Ibid.*, Dewey and Bentley.

For pragmatists, that is, the problem is a problem of theory. We cannot turn to qualities with qualities because this may give us a having not worth being had. Not worth the having, especially without any skills in qualitative controls. This would be something akin to experiencing and not knowing what.

> What's the good of having
> Even if it's good?
> When we know not
> Whether we our having should?
> Isn't this the proverbial
> *Unreasonable life*
> Not worth the having?

In pragmatism we need criteria for our "doing" that permits some preferred selection to occur. I take it that animals are *doing*, in contrast and in addition to the *growing* taking place in plants and the *being* of inorganic and non-organismic things. In this age of electronic computers, our words are acquiring new uses in addition to the fine distinctions so painfully achieved through penetrating inquiries of our ancestors. We run the mind-blotting risk of machines that "tell" us what conclusions are, and "indicate" via various devices what we are to conclude. The exactitude of machine-registered data may soon preclude incorrect answers to well-established and accepted questions. We may soon be unable to enjoy the privilege of error and the excitement of challenging the questions drawn up by whoever has the power to provide machines with "problems." One thinker has this to say about our TV era: "With an instrument as powerful as television at hand, and with its strength increasing steadily, it is becoming more and more perilous for anyone to come up with the wrong answer on vital public issues in a free society."[5] Our systems development corporations may make it very nearly impossible to establish systems of our own full of the inevitable inexactitude for which mere individual thinkers have gained notoriety. Groups, organizations, and systems may refuse to permit choices. Selections may become impossible and Orwell's 1984 will have finally arrived.

It is important, therefore, to have all intelligence be a knowing of some sort, and that all intelligence remain cognition. If there is an intelligence in art, cognition is present. Certainly, theoretical skills or linguistic

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[5]Robert W. Horton, "To Pay or Not To Pay: A Report on Subscription Television," Occasional Paper published by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara, California, 1960.

symbolizations do not exhaust our doings or the deliberate relationships that can be instituted by men. But any *theory* about relationships of all sorts will be subject to the technicalities of logic and the procedures of verification. Men do manipulate sound, color, stone and metrical patterns. If qualitative theory is the contribution that I think it is, then discourse about qualities and understanding of art will be enhanced, become more accurate and subject to systematic educational control. Our youth will be able to become as intelligent about art as other subject matters. Now, whether our youth become more intelligent *in* art is another matter, as V. and C. indicate.

Quality in experience (qualitative experience) is a matter of perception, "creating, deploying, working and reworking." Qualitative intelligence is displayed when selected qualities act in a "regulative way over the doing and making." This kind of intelligence is art when qualities are taken as purposes, deliberately employed in guiding the activities of doing and making in order that qualities again become the outcomes of regulated activity. This activity, this doing, is not theoretical and demands no theoretical articulation, but it is knowing and intelligence, nevertheless. In operation, this is qualitative knowing, the knowledge of the artist.

This qualitative knowing becomes subject to the discipline of esthetic theory when the operations are being accounted for (via description). If the artist is, in this sense, intelligent in these creative manipulations that are focally qualitative, he is qualitatively intelligent, and he knows what he is doing. This, as in the case of all intelligence, is cognition in operation. Not an affair of theory, until Villemain and Champlin account for this knowledge in such a way as to be theoretically intelligible. This they have done. (See both of their unpublished dissertations, Teachers College, Columbia University.) But they must permit the meanings of esthetic-qualitative intelligence to be subject to theoretical scrutiny. They do not permit this scrutiny when quality is claimed as ontologically one with experience. They do permit this scrutiny when they provide us with adequate descriptions of the artists' doings.

In Deweyian terms, this inquiry becomes subject to the province of scientific method. Science cannot propose operational procedures for the artist, but the conditions of science must be met in developing any theory about art.

The artist knows what he is doing—he is intelligent about manipulating qualitative symbols and in manipulating the qualitative character of all symbols. When he *reports* his procedure, he must meet the conditions of theoretical inquiry if we are to understand what he is talking about. V. and C. have provided the artist with an adequate theoretical means

for permitting theoreticians, estheticians, and artists to re-establish communication. Since we cannot all become expert artists, V. and C. must let the musician know qualitatively what he is doing in the manipulation of sound and they must know theoretically what he is doing qualitatively. This may provide us an empirical ground for understanding qualitative intelligence that can be at once theoretical, provided that Villemain and Champlin remain pragmatists in their inquiries.

While we can agree with the authors when they state that scientific method may not be "the final good for human life," it is, nevertheless, the only method that will permit us to recognize this good theoretically when we've got it.

Age Was a Bird

By KENNETH BERNARD

Age was a bird that flew south
On butter wings. Still feathers over New England
Dripped in the Carolinas and melted
Into the sea somewhere east of Panama.
Age was a bird that flew south
That should have stayed. North is the mind
And South the passion, North the cold house
I dream in and South my Tory Zone.
But into the sky and over the water
(The sea was bright and sun burned deep),
Into and over, from North to the South,
It flew, from the hills to the valleys,
The bird that was age, it flew, it flew,
South, to the South, I melt.

KENNETH BERNARD's poetry has appeared in the *Western Humanities Review*, *Mutiny*, *Whetstone*, and N.Y. *Herald-Tribune*, and an article on Dreiser was published in a recent issue of the *University of Kansas City Review*. He teaches at Long Island University.

■ BOOKS

Sholom Aleichem: A Hundred Years and It's Still "Now"

By LEONARD E. NATHAN

The Jew away from Jewishness has often had to discover what Jewishness means the hard way—from strangers. And, if he has decided to learn more than strangers can teach him (that is, what he is not), then he may still tend to learn from the outside, from commentries on commentaries, from, say Martin Buber on Hassidism. About this I can speak for myself, at least. Of the two times that I have attended synagogue, one was to make a speech on the writer that I am about to discuss. And both times I felt like an outsider, not because of the kind regulars around me, but because the act of going was so foreign to me, as if, again, I had to arrive through a door marked "For Those Entering the Synagogue Through the Idea of a Synagogue."

When I picked up the stories of Sholom Aleichem for the first time, all such indirections—those desperate and abstract freeways to a lost address—were unnecessary. I felt neither apology nor patronizing in my attention. There, so to speak, he *was,* like a familiar: no reservations, no deviousness, and all of a sudden real. High-minded interpreters were not necessary, only wits and imagination. But, for all his immediacy, this year is the centenary of Sholom Aleichem, a man dead before the Germans freed a murderous barbarism that we had imagined extinct. And yet the experience of Sholom Aleichem and his people, though irreversibly ended as an historical fact, is still so immediate that nothing, not even translation, can entirely distort or deaden it. Its power and movement, its variety and expressiveness, can still satisfy the hunger for reality that all great literature satisfies. As a view of life, his best work partakes of that com-

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pleteness to which one, when the story's end is reached, can only say, "Yes, that's how it must happen."

"How it must happen" is the true writer's full answer to the two essentially religious questions that have to be asked for human fulfillment: what am I? and what, at my worst and best, could I be? In short, what is and what is possible, mated in the single nest of actual experience.

These questions can be asked and answered in different tones that range from the voice of tragedy to that of comedy. The tragic voice is committed to intoning man's individual fate, his personal capacity for greatness, his immense capacity to do evil or good. The tragic way leads through calamity, suffering, and finally a reverent comprehension of human dignity in a universe that makes dignity all but impossible. The comic voice entertains no such exalted purpose, is not concerned with man spelled with a capital M. Comedy reveals man as the natural fool, that social animal with a genius for confusion and folly which turns him and his society upside down. Born naturally to a world of trouble, comic man sets out in the manner of the determined *shlemiel* or *shlimazl*[1] to make things even more difficult for himself, and thereby reveals a native gift for ridiculous incongruity that outstrips anything that his environment can offer. Out of the comic voice, revealing that gift for incongruity, comes then the delighted understanding of our own silliness, the petty follies, which we usually ignore or cherish like favorite children. If the tragic writer shows us the possibilities of our greatness in the middle of calamity, the comic writer shows us our enduring capacity to recover from our minor, if sometimes poignant, lunacies, even if tomorrow we indulge in ten others.

Among Jewish writers in Yiddish, Isaac Leib Peretz has the gift for tragic speech, and Sholom Aleichem is the great comic voice. This voice takes its inflection and idiom from the fictional village of Kasrilevka, the home of a folk who divide roughly into fifty percent *shlemiel* and fifty percent *shlimazl,* a fair sampling, one must concede, for all mankind. But why, it might be asked, did Sholom Aleichem pick for a subject of comedy a village so poor that almost everyone is starving? Isn't he verging on the tragic or pathetic? I think that his reason is simple: if *these* people, impoverished and always on the edge of some fresh reversal, can keep their wit, their love of life, then human possibility and human dignity

[1]Archetypal folk-figures in Yiddish culture, the *shlemiel* and *shlimazl* have been defined as follows: A *shlimazl* is the eternally luckless man who always gets the soup spilled on him; the *shlemiel* is the man who inevitably does the spilling.

are tougher than we usually think. For Sholom Aleichem insists that a Kasrilik is known in the world as a man who refuses to let "poverty degrade him." Poverty in his people is like a weakness in character, or a stomach ache—distracting and dangerous to the whole man, but often able to provoke its owner to wonderful thoughts, dreams, inventions, wisdom—not as an escape from a hard life, but as an enrichment of it. Misery thus brings out unbelievable human possibilities, good ones as well as bad. In Sholom Aleichem's village, poverty, like a woman in dire travail, can bring to birth a great prodigy of wit fathered by hope, or desperation, or reverence, or love, or simply a deep sense of the ridiculousness of human existence. Which fact, by the way, suggests that the true comic voice is much closer to the tragic one than we sometimes realize.

Take, for instance, Tevye the Dairyman, Sholom Aleichem's philosopher of mother wit, who, on the verge of prayer, is violently interrupted when his horse picks this solemn moment to run away:

> But in spite of everything, we are still Jews. When evening comes we have to say our prayers. You can imagine what the prayers sounded like if I tell you that just as I was about to begin *Shmin-esra* my horse suddenly broke away as if possessed by the devil and ran wildly off through the woods. Have you ever tried standing on one spot facing the east while a horse was pulling you where *it* wanted to go? I had no choice but to run after him, holding on to the reins and chanting, "*God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob.*" A fine way to say *Shmin-esra*! And just my luck, at a moment when I was in the mood to pray with feeling, out of the depths of my heart, hoping it would lift my spirits. . . .
>
> So there I was, running after the wagon and chanting at the top of my voice, as if I were a cantor in a synagogue: "*Thou sustainest the living with loving kindness* (and sometimes with a little food) *and keepest thy faith with them that sleep in the dust.* (The dead are not the only ones who lie in the dust; Oh, how low we the living are laid, what hells we go through, and I don't mean the rich people of Yehupetz who spend their summers at the *datchas* of Boiberik, eating and drinking and living off the fat of the land. . . . Oh, Heavenly Father, why does this happen to me? Am I not as good as others? Help me, dear God!) *Look upon our afflictions.* (Look down, dear God! See how we struggle and come to the aid of the poor, because who will look out for us if you don't?) *Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed.* (Send us the cure, we have the ailment already.) *Bless this year for us, O Lord, our God, with every kind of produce* (corn and wheat and every other grain, and if you do, will I get anything out of it, *shlimazl* that I am? For instance, what difference does it make to my poor horse whether oats are dear or cheap?)."
>
> But that's enough. Of God you don't ask questions. If you're one of

> the Chosen People you must see the good in everything and say, "This too is for the best." God must have willed it so. . . .
>
> "*And for slanderers let there be no hope,*" I chant further. The slanderers and rich scoffers who say there is no God—a fine figure they'll cut when they get *there*. They'll pay for their disbelief, and with interest too, for He is one who "breaketh his enemies and humbleth the arrogant." He pays you according to your deserts. You don't trifle with Him; you approach Him humbly, pray to Him and beg His mercy. "*O Merciful Father, hear our voice, pay heed to our lamentations. Spare us and have mercy upon us* (my wife and children too—they are hungry). *Accept, O Lord, thy people Israel and their prayer, even as you did in the days of the Holy Temple, when the priests and the Levites. . . .*"
>
> Suddenly the horse stopped. In a hurry I finish *Shmin-esra,* lift up my eyes, and behold two mysterious creatures coming toward me out of the forest, disguised or at least dressed in the strangest fashion.[2]

The two strangers are finally responsible for Tevye's falling into moderate wealth. Tevye's prayer is thus rewarded. But what prayer? The official pious one that you or I or some ordinary man would have given? I don't think so. That official or public prayer is only half of what Tevye says to God. His parenthetical, spontaneous commentaries make up the other half, those private words to God, so personal, so sincere, so whole-hearted, that a humane deity could not turn away. In short, Tevye's prayer has in it the intensity of a man who speaks to God as if God were someone to whom you could really speak and who, because He shares a profound if difficult intelligibility with His creatures, would understand. Perhaps Martin Buber might say that Tevye is one of those rare folk among us who can speak to God using the familiar "Thou," and expect an answer as surely as could the patriarchs of Israel. After all, Tevye has held nothing back: grief, frustration, humor, reverence—all his humanity is uttered before us. What more could God ask of him?

Like Tevye, the whole town of Kasrilevka can react to an incongruous experience with an intensity that is nothing short of, in the oldest sense, heroic. In "Dreyfus in Kasrilevka," Sholom Aleichem "reports" the Dreyfus case as its affects a whole community. The story is a brief and powerful rendering of the total involvement of the town with an event apparently beyond its experience and understanding, as Paris is "beyond" Kasrilevka. Beyond the town's experience, that is *until* Kasriliks make the event over by their own moral imagination, purify it of all its circumstantial and Parisian superfluities, substantiate it by making Dreyfus a third party to any dialogue the townsmen hold. The result is that the case becomes

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[2]*Selected Stories of Sholom Aleichem,* New York, 1956, pp. 50-51.

wholly an affair of Kasrilevka. The process of this transformation, this naturalization is characteristic: At first, the newspaper accounts of the case are merely abstracts of an exciting narrative; they then become partially domesticated like a captured wild animal or a mulish piece of reality that is never quite under control. And at last, except as a sort of intolerable annunciation of grief, the paper itself loses import, and there is no point in blaming or even believing it. The townsfolk ultimately must turn on the man who receives the paper, finding only in another living human the possibilities of defeat and an opportunity for wrath against a perverse failure of reality to live up to itself:

> "It cannot be!" Kasrilevka shouted with one voice. "Such a verdict is impossible! Heaven and earth swore that the truth must prevail. What kind of lies are you telling us?"
>
> "Fools!" shouted Zeidel, and thrust the paper into their faces. "Look! See what the paper says!"
>
> "Paper! Paper!" shouted Kasrilevka. "And if you stood with one foot in heaven and the other on earth, would we believe you?"
>
> "Such a thing must not be. It must never be! Never! Never!"
>
> And—who was right?[3]

Of course, both paper and townsmen are right, as Sholom Aleichem, I believe, intends us to know. The paper reports correctly the refusal of many men to be honest, courageous, and reverent. The townsmen cannot accept such a refusal; it *must* not be, if men are to live like men in this world. Kasrilevka says no. And Paris, Dreyfus, his defenders, his accusers, the good, the evil, the indifferent, have suddenly come home to a living human moment to be known and judged. Thus, the distortion or reworking of the case by the Kasriliks is a realistic creation of art, and needs only for its finish the furious twist of their last reaction, the completing moral indignation that keeps the cause of every Dreyfus always alive: "This must not be, even if it is!" Such talk, such a refusal to let reality narrow itself to the worst and the least in us, is a kind of heroic action. It is a cry arising from a working conviction that nothing short of the best in man is good enough for man. As such, the irrelevant outburst is the fullest response that the stubborn, apparently naive and childish townsmen can give. Like honest children, they see no good reason for human wickedness and find it inexcusable, if altogether a true part of life.

The full and intense response in the people of Sholom Aleichem can be exemplified over and over, in "On Account of a Hat," "A Yom Kippur Scandal," "The Convoy." These stories, to name a few, for solidity and

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

richness compel comparison to the best of the world's short stories, as the best of the world's short stories compel comparison to the great scriptural tales in that both embody the comprehending concreteness which Allen Tate, defining poetry, asserts comes into being when "the will and its formulas are put back into an implicit relation with the whole of our experience."[4] This deeply imagined and understood concreteness provides a changeless knowledge beyond abstractions, programs, biased partialities, a clear and direct knowledge that has been called, when applied to the perception of inspired men, vision.

In other words, and I believe without any irreverence, Sholom Aleichem must be regarded as a religious writer in the great tradition of Hebrew prophets who were concerned with the misery of human life and with a valid dream of how life could be if men fulfilled themselves on earth so that all days would be as the Sabbath. But it was Sholom Aleichem's gift to turn the suffering and defeat of the children of Israel into startling comedy. This comedy gives a unique kind of pleasure, a delight in seeing life as it is, and yet, beyond our private little concerns, as a transmutation of reality into something ultimate and universal: that devout experience of the human totality. Sholom Aleichem says to his readers: "The moment is not yesterday or tomorrow, but *now*, before you in this act of reading." No matter how darkly he or other writers picture our nature and our circurstances, we are permitted at such times to witness a kind of miracle, our humanity mirrored in their imagination, their genius speaking for us at our most human. It is during such moments that the great contraries of what is and what should be—bitterly divorced in our common life—are rewedded. At these instants of wholeness, the writer and reader engage in the most momentous of all speech, those essential inquiries of the old Rabbi of the Babylonian *Talmud* who used to ask, "If I be not for myself, who shall be for me; and if I am by myself what am I? and if not now—when?" Because the answer to these questions is sometimes passionately funny doesn't mean, as Sholom Aleichem repeatedly proves, that it is not the most serious answer an honest man can give.

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[4]Allen Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry*, New York, 1958, p. 113.

More on Wisdom vs. Knowledge

The Firmament of Time. By Loren Eiseley. Atheneum Publishers, 1960. $3.50.

The Western Intellectual Tradition. By J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish. Harper and Brothers, 1960. $7.50.

The Common Sense of Science. By J. Bronowski. Modern Library Paperback, Random House, 1960. 95¢.

That wisdom and knowledge are not only distinct but probably in conflict with one another is a favorite theme of the day. It appears almost everywhere, in the more pontifical editorials of the daily and weekly press, in discussions of education where it takes the form of an alleged antithesis between the humanities and the sciences, in the current religious revival, of course, where the distinction seems to suggest that true wisdom must indeed be somehow supernatural, and in both the respectable and the underground worlds of philosophy: here it oscillates between the expulsion of values altogether from the philosophic enterprise and their inevitable reinstatement extravagantly clothed in existentialistic garments.

Now, this sour recognition is not sour enough to lead to the suggestion that there is no difference between knowledge and wisdom, or that the two must always vary directly; nor to the supposition that the word "wisdom" may not have a meaning, however imprecise. For if I understand the juxtaposition of these two now over-used terms, they are but a current translation of the antique dualism of ends and means, values and facts: science (knowledge) can show us how to take the next step but philosophy (wisdom) or something still more recondite alone can tell us whether we ought to take that next step. There has been no real progress here since Socrates, in his impudent way, informed us that while physicians can make us well, only the philosopher knows whether we ought to be well; or even since man first fell, having come upon the knowledge of good and evil.

We have never ceased hearing the same warning against *hubris,* against pride in reason: whom the gods destroy they first make intelligent. The irony, if not the tragedy, seems to be that scientists are now joining the obscurantists, revivalists, and the simply knowledgeless in the march to the Wailing Wall where, to quote one of Professor Eiseley's physicist heroes, they prepare to recite, "I have tampered enough with the universe."

These remarks are set off by the recent brilliant and irritating little book by Loren Eiseley. Professor Eiseley, formerly head of the anthropology department at the University of Pennsylvania and now the provost of the University, has distinguished himself of late by some remarkably eloquent writing and has won something of a following by his articles, lectures, and his earlier book, *The Immense Journey*. The present work is based on six lectures at the University of Cincinnati in 1959. Here is a paleontologist who has left the museum and its dusty style for something more flamboyant and poetic, a scientist unafraid to write well, even, at times, in purple and with more than a touch of sentimentality.

The Firmament of Time (title from Shelley) is a short history of how the world and man came to be regarded as "natural," although at the end Dr. Eiseley confesses to being unsure as to the meaning of the term, his last chapter, for example, inquiring "how natural is 'natural'?" He is dealing here with both the science of evolution and the evolution of science. The first four chapters constitute a necessarily abbreviated yet extraordinarily lucid sketch of how the world, life, death, and finally man came to be "natural." These steps of increasing naturalness march with the seventeenth and eighteenth century "world machine" until it becomes less like a machine and more like a growing, living, and dying organism. Naturalism changes as it comes into the nineteenth century, but not into something less natural. Professor Eiseley puts stress on the rise and fall of the doctrine of catastrophism in geology and shows how the study of fossils (how death became natural) had made "the common day turn marvelous. Creation—whether seen or unseen—must be even now about us everywhere in the prosaic world of the present." In the chapter on how life became natural we are presented once more with the never-tiresome story of Darwin and those to whom he was indebted; the chapter is something of an outline of the author's splendid book on evolution, *Darwin's Century*. "How man became natural" is another fascinating paleontological account of man's anthropoid ancestors.

So far, the book is largely exposition, punctuated by vivid prose and poetic insight, often stimulated by personal encounters with fossils or with life perhaps about to become fossil. And it would be unfair to say that in the last two chapters the scientist begins to lose nerve. These chapters ("How Human is Man?" and "How Natural is 'Natural'?") open with a reference to Kierkegaard, who, with assists from Pascal, tends to dominate the philosophy of the conclusion. Which is to the general effect that science needs now to pause, to ponder just how much naturalism man can stand, to consider the eternal on the one hand and juvenile delinquency, war, and the bomb on the other. For

> it is with the coming of man that a vast hole seems to open in nature, a vast black whirlpool spinning faster and faster, consuming flesh, stones, soil, minerals, sucking down the lightning, wrenching power from the atom, until the ancient sounds of nature are drowned in the cacophony of something which is no longer nature, something instead which is loose and knocking at the world's heart, something demonic and no longer planned—escaped, it may be—spewed out of nature, contending in a final giant's game against its master.

This is a good example of Professor Eiseley's style, especially when incandescent, and of his existentialist-*cum-hubris* speculation. These ideas are spelled out, in a way familiar at least since *The Organization Man*, with the plea for a personal rather than a social ethic and with "a final recognition that science is not enough for man. It is not the road back to the waiting Garden, for that road lies through the heart of man. . . . Man is not totally compounded of the nature we profess to understand."

Now it would be very difficult to take exception to a personal ethic, or the heart of man, or to a saving sense of mystery, or to claim, in some unspecified way, that "science *is* enough." But even in a review like this (which should not be the occasion for developing the reviewer's own position) at least certain things need to be suggested.

For one thing, Dr. Eiseley's assumption seems to be that man's heart and soul need to be protected from an all-out naturalism and therefore, I imagine, from the ministrations of "science," just as the universe itself, not to mention the biological balance of nature, needs to be made secure against the physicist and other tamperers. Why? Because man has been making a mess of it, and his knowledge, unaccompanied by wisdom, has but given power to a latent demonism. If this is indeed Professor Eiseley's position (and, because of his rhetoric, it is possible I may be mistaken), then truly there is nothing here not found in the long tradition from Ecclesiastes to Niebuhr and Tillich. Yet there is something missing from all this. Perhaps it may be found in what is conspicuously absent from the present book—any talk of social man except in the invidious sense of a "social ethic," as if the ethical dimension could be asocial any more than man himself could be. It is not that an anthropologist could miss the moral significance of man as a social animal; it appears rather in the fact that Professor Eiseley fails to mention any social or psychological science other than anthropology.

This failure cannot be attributed to the academic modesty which keeps professors within their own bailiwicks, for there are a number of references at least to physics in the present book; nor (it would appear) can it be laid to the suspicion that sociology, political theory, or psychology are somehow *manqué*. But it does seem that Dr. Eiseley is fearful of

future developments in the social sciences, since they would probably be unaccompanied by wisdom. As with physics, the new sciences of man would almost inevitably be deflected—he appears to feel—to totalitarian control, to designing more effective techniques for human demonism, or at least for consolidating the "social ethic." Instead of reaching the heart of man, psychology can only reach, it seems, the nervous system or perhaps the glands. What will reach the heart of man, Professor Eiseley does not say precisely, but his references to Kierkegaard and others suggest that although science is not enough, something else, something not quite so "natural," might be.

Instead of now proceeding to make some peremptory suggestions to the effect that there can be no substitute for knowledge, that at least as far as *problematic situations* are concerned science (or intelligent inquiry) *is* enough, or that Professor Eiseley's intimation that science cannot deal with ends or values is simply an abetment of the sterile dualism which derogates human knowledge to the position of a "mere" instrument, let me as a reviewer briefly refer the reader to another important and well-received writer on science, the English mathematician, J. Bronowski. For a long time he has been engaged in the humanistic task of approaching values scientifically, and two of his books have appeared this year. The subtitle of *The Western Intellectual Tradition* is "From Leonardo to Hegel," and it correctly indicates that this is a true history of ideas rather than a history of science. The authors make a particular point of handling intellectual history in a way which brings together the arts, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Three main parts delineate the scope of the book: "The Expanding World," "The Age of Reasoned Dissent," and "The Great Revolutions." Unfortunately, the discussion stops with Hegel and so does not confront directly the existentialist malaise that serves as a backdrop for Dr. Eiseley's speculations. However, *The Common Sense of Science* does act as a kind of supplement and covers part of the ground covered in *The Firmament of Time*. Although this does not pretend to be a review of Bronowski as well as of Eiseley, I still should like to present at least two points from the English scientist as a kind of antidote for the anguish of the American.

The Western Intellectual Tradition is a study in history rather than in methodology, but throughout the work Professors Bronowski and Mazlish take occasion to talk about scientific method as it has developed since the Scientific Revolution. They are struck, as are so many philosophers of science, by the fact that the fruitful union of empiricism, rationalism, and imagination (to put it in the most summary fashion) has been almost the hallmark of scientific advance. The joining of respect for facts with the rigorous development of inference, shot through with

what must be called poetic insight, has proven to be an unbeatable conspiracy in the steady advance of the physical and life sciences. But what about the social sciences? In the last chapter, the authors suggest that the union of fact and speculation has, for various reasons, developed more slowly in the social sciences.

> The human sciences have failed to find as coherent a method as the natural sciences, because they have not fused together the two modes of inquiry, the empirical and the rational. This is still a major shortcoming in the human sciences: that the attempt to construct a reasoned analysis of society from the motives of individuals is divorced from the practical study of the large-scale functioning of states and communities. It may be that some more profound conception is required to marry the rational and the empirical approaches in the human sciences.

The authors see nothing which will prevent such a marriage—or its final consummation.

This constitutes my first point, i.e., that knowledge cannot be written off until it has been achieved. Professor Eiseley is himself a notable social scientist. But he has, in part, lost heart because man has not yet become a god. The "profound conception" Bronowski and Mazlish look forward to may also marry wisdom and knowledge. If it is not presumptuous, one might urge Professor Eiseley to be more patient.

The second point will be found in *The Common Sense of Science* where, again in the conclusion, we are told: "The sense of doom in us today is not a fear of science; it is a fear of war. And the causes of war were not created by science. . . ." Now, is not this the nub of the issue? Certainly contemporary man is bewildered, and the elaboration of his anxiety need not detain us, since it will be found expressed almost everywhere. But the problem is an etiological one: are the causes of "war" (in the Hobbesian sense of man being to man a wolf) a mysterious perversity in the heart of man unreachable by anything less mysterious than, say, the ministrations of a regent of the supernatural; or can they be located in a developing secular *knowledge* of the conditions which produce war, conditions not only economic and political but psychiatric as well?

It is all too easy, and too fashionable, to wring one's hands and lament the inadequacies of science, of knowledge. It is something else, something more congenial to the spirit of the history of science (and also more modest), to recognize that man is just beginning to understand himself. To arrest that understanding on a charge of first degree unwisdom is almost a definition of the human comedy.

Antioch College —George R. Geiger

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